

ClubTest  
**2015**

**20 FAIRWAY WOODS+16 HYBRIDS**  
ALL NEW, TESTED AND RATED

P. 99

A  
Sports  
Illustrated  
PUBLICATION

MAGAZINE

**Green-Reading Special**

# SEE THE PERFECT LINE

ADAM SCOTT'S  
SUREFIRE MOVE TO  
DRAIN MORE PUTTS

P. 64

**PLUS**

*The*  
**BEST NEW  
BALLS**

P. 126

Adam Scott  
demonstrates the  
AimPoint Express  
green-reading method.

**GOLF.com**

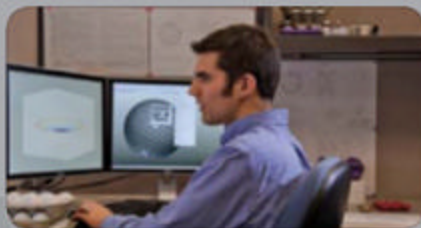


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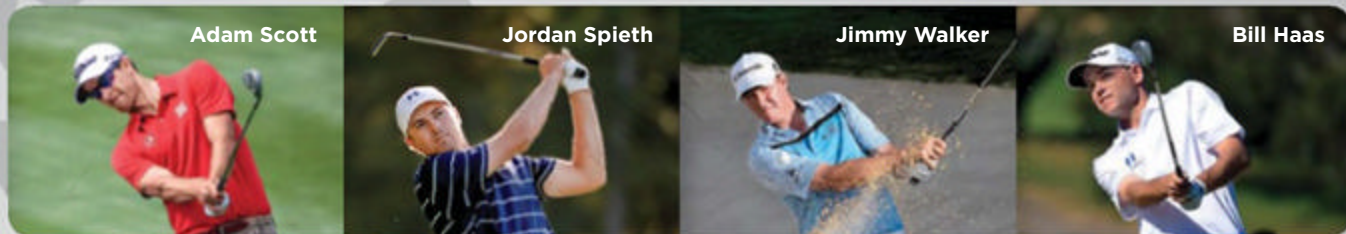
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## SEE THE PERFECT LINE

p.64 **The New Way to Read Greens**

If you have trouble reading greens (and our research says that you do), help is on the way. We offer seven groundbreaking techniques to show you the perfect read on any putt, with help from experts such as Mark Sweeney (left), the mind behind AimPoint Express.



## p. 78 **THE GOLF MAGAZINE INTERVIEW: FRED FUNK**

Ten years ago, laser-straight Fred Funk shocked the golf world when he won the Players Championship. How did a 48-year-old, injury-plagued bunter beat the Tour's baddest bombers? Location, location, location.



## p. 88 **THE INNOVATORS 2015**

It's always been a thinking person's game, but golf makes huge strides when great minds see it in new ways. Here, in their own words, are the stories of some of golf's heady game-changers.

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Porsche recommends **MOBIL 1** and **MICHELIN**

[porscheusa.com/cayenne](http://porscheusa.com/cayenne)

## Adept at moving things. Your soul, for instance.

In 2003, Porsche redefined what a sports car can be with the introduction of the Cayenne. Since then, each new generation of the Cayenne has been more powerful, more efficient and more innovative than the last. The 2015 Cayenne S continues the evolution, with a new 420 hp twin-turbo V6, a top track speed of 161 mph and a 0–60 time of 5.1 seconds with Sport Chrono. With this kind of power, it's hard not to be moved. Porsche. There is no substitute.

## The 2015 Porsche Cayenne



**PORSCHE**

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At 41, Boo Weekley has jump-started his Tour career.

### FRONT 9



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Rules Guy makes a cold-weather call.

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Get maximum power off the tee.



## CLUB TEST 2015

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**p.126**  
PLAY BALL!  
TODAY'S NEW  
MODELS ARE  
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AND MADE TO  
FIT ANYONE.

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# GOLF DIGITAL

MAGAZINE

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## TOUR CONFIDENTIAL

Every Monday, watch the video edition of **GOLF.com's** Tour Confidential, where host Jessica Marksburry and panelists from *Golf Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated* tackle the hottest topics in the game today.



## LIVE Q&A WITH BRADY RIGGS

Need a quick fix before your weekend round? **GOLF.com** has you covered! Upload a video clip of your swing and Top 100 Teacher Brady Riggs will analyze it during his live Q&A every Tuesday at noon EST.



## THE VAN CYNICAL COLUMN

Each Tuesday, *Sports Illustrated's* Gary Van Sickle offers his contrarian take on the game, like why Pine Valley (above), not Seminole, might be the ideal bucket-list course. Read it every week on **GOLF.com**.



## TOUR PROS AFTER DARK

**GOLF.com** is inside the ropes and out on the town with the game's best photo gallery. See candid shots of your favorite pros, like LPGA star Belen Mozo (above) meeting a new arrival at Thailand's Sriracha Tiger Zoo.

### TWITTER

**Alan Shipnuck**  
@alanshipnuck



One of my hobbies is showing up at a golf tourney without the proper credentials and talking my way into the best parking.

**Eamon Lynch**  
@eamonlynch



Been traveling for 29.5 hours & still 90 mins from my bed. I now know what Tour life was like for @garyplayer years ago!

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**2** Position the phone four to seven inches above any photo bearing the yellow **SCAN THIS PHOTO** label [example, left], as if you were taking a picture [flash optional]. If you have access to a Wi-Fi connection, downloads will be faster.



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# TABLET EXCLUSIVES

May 2015 Volume 57, Issue 5

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### DIGITAL BONUS



#### Get the Read

Check out our exclusive bonus cover story video from AimPoint putting guru Mark Sweeney.



#### Lone Star State Stunners

Joe Passov picks his favorite tracks on the Texas swing, like the GC of Houston [above].



#### New Clubs from Every Angle

Enjoy 360-degree spins of every new club in this month's issue, plus ClubTest roundtables.



#### Zach Johnson in Slo-Mo

Control the 2007 Masters champ's swing with a finger swipe, only on our tablet edition.



#### Learn from the Best

Watch video versions of this month's Your Game tips from teachers like Bernie Najar [above].



#### Go to Rules School

Our resident expert tackles your stickiest conundrums. Plus: a bonus quiz!

TOP ROW: ANGUS MURRAY; LARRY LAMBRECHT; MICHAEL CHINI; BOTTOM ROW: ANGUS MURRAY (2); RULES GUY: ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

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**BREITLING**  
— *for* —  
**BENTLEY**

A black and white photograph of a male golfer in mid-swing, wearing a Callaway cap and a polo shirt with an Odyssey logo. The background features a large, stylized Union Jack flag. The text 'THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS SPEED FROM A FASTER HEAD DESIGN.' is overlaid in a bold, italicized font, with 'OUTRAGEOUS', 'FASTER', and 'HEAD DESIGN.' in red and the other words in white.

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**BUILT FOR  
OUTRAGEOUS SPEED.**

# LETTERS

Our readers sound off

"I'M GLAD MONTY WAS FINALLY ABLE TO WIN ON U.S. SOIL, BUT IN MY OPINION, IF IT ISN'T DONE AGAINST THE BEST IN THE GAME, THEN IT ISN'T A MAJOR."

—DAVID T. SWOISH

Monty's March interview got readers talking.



## THE FULL MONTY

I really enjoyed Shane O'Donoghue's *Golf Magazine* interview with Colin Montgomerie ("The Road to Redemption," March 2015). In the interview, Monty admits that he has never practiced much, which is his prerogative, I guess. But then he goes on to say that "practice, practice, practice doesn't work," pointing out that Tiger Woods is a classic example. Come on, Monty! Maybe if Colin had practiced more, he might have won at least one U.S. tournament before the age of 50. In the words of Ben Hogan: "There isn't enough daylight in any one day to practice all the shots you need to."

Tim Groza, Hiawassee, Ga.

I wish people would stop perpetrating the hoax that Colin Montgomerie is now a "major winner" because he won the Senior PGA Championship and the U.S. Senior Open. I'm glad Monty was able to finally win on U.S. soil by beating a field of 50- and 60-year-olds, but in my opinion, if it isn't done against the best in the game, then it isn't a major. Otherwise, you might as well tune in to the Tennis Channel to watch John McEnroe and Michael Chang battle it out for another "grand slam."

David T. Swoish, Costa Mesa, Calif.

I enjoyed the March issue interview with Colin Montgomerie. I had the privilege of playing with Monty in the Nissan Open at Riviera in 2003. What an experience! He was so friendly, approachable and humble—a real gentleman, especially putting up with the guys in our foursome! In addition to fun golf conversation, what really impressed me was his knowledge of cars—and not just the names of vehicles. Monty also knew a lot about the design cues, specs and associated technologies. He said he really enjoyed talking cars with some "car guys." I'll always be a Monty fan and wish him the best in 2015.

Bucky Kahl, Reynolds Plantation, Ga.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

In Mark Broadie's recent column ("Gained Weight," March 2015), he argues that Strokes Gained is a better measure of a golfer's performance than the "traditional method" of fairways hit, greens in regulation and putts per round. While Broadie makes a strong case, I believe he misses the most important measure of a PGA Tour player's performance: the variance of a player's average earnings per event. Take two Tour players, both with an identical but slightly worse Strokes Gained performance than the PGA Tour average. The player who has five great events and 15 poor ones would earn far more over the season than the other more consistently average player. The player with five great performances could also be the PGA Tour's leading money winner, even though he had a worse than average Strokes Gained performance. Incidentally, handicap calculations for recreational players work in a similar way: Take two players who have both averaged 80 over their last 20 rounds. The player who shot 75 one day and 85 the next would have a much lower handicap than the one who shot 80 every day.

Dale Orr, Toronto, Ont.

## KIM POSSIBLE

Thank you for the recent interview with Christina Kim ("Still Bubbly After All

These Years," March 2015). How could you not root for this young woman after all she has been through? She sounds like a wonderful person. And Michelle Wie deserves thanks, as well. When Christina needed a friend, Michelle Wie stepped right in. As with many who help others, we only find out about it in a roundabout way. Michelle Wie is a U.S. Women's Open champion, but long before Pinehurst, she has obviously been a champion person.

Joe Miegoc, Carbondale, Penn.

## FIT ME BABY ONE MORE TIME

I would like to compliment Peter Kostis on his excellent article in the March 2015 issue ("It's Not You, It's Your Clubs"). Having been a custom-club builder for more than 20 years and a clubfitter for the last seven, I can tell you that Peter's article truly identifies the areas that most of us clubfitters find to be wrong with the vast majority of today's players' equipment. Unfortunately, retail sales of golf clubs have resulted in mass-media advertising of one thing: distance. In so doing, loft, length, and weight have changed dramatically, mostly to the detriment of the player. One comment that I wish Peter would have concluded his article with: "See a professional clubfitter and get properly fit."

Dave Kenzie, McCormick, S.C.

## LET'S DO LAUNCH

Thank you for the excellent Your Game tip by Brady Riggs ("Launch a Big Draw with One Easy Move," March 2015). I played the ball too far forward, which caused my shoulders to open too much, and resulted in pushes to the right. After reading the article, I hit some long, straight drives today. Keep up the good work! I'll be keeping this article in my golf bag.

Rex Takata, Honolulu, Hawaii

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Write to: *Golf Magazine*,

1271 Ave. of the Americas, 31st Fl., New York, N.Y. 10020, or e-mail us at [golfletters@golf.com](mailto:golfletters@golf.com)

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## FROM THE EDITOR



David M. Clarke, Editor

## Your To-Do List

Read any green, update your woods, and hang out with “The Funkster”

**I**F YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU'VE faced more than one putt that you just know is going to break a couple of balls to the right—but then proceeds to do the exact opposite. Or maybe that knee-knocker looks arrow-straight—until it curiously curves to the left. What gives? For many, reading greens is harder than reading Russian literature.

Weekend players aren't alone, of course. Even the pros struggle to see the line. How often have you watched Phil Mickelson drop his jaw after a three-foot slider defied him? Or seen Bubba Watson gripe when a putt failed to move the way he predicted? Help is here, in the form of our expert green-readers. We picked the brains of the game's **brightest putting minds (p.64)**, including Adam Scott (*below*). The World No. 4 uses a groundbreaking green-reading method called AimPoint Express (a simpler version of the original AimPoint system). The technique essentially takes your eyes (which can deceive you) out of the equation, letting your feet read slopes and steepness, with an assist from your fingers. It's innovative and simpler than it sounds. But that's not all—in addition to the reading lesson from Scott, we offer six other methods to help you hole a lot more putts.

Finding a ball that accentuates your game's strengths and mitigates

**FOR SOME, READING GREENS IS HARDER THAN READING RUSSIAN LITERATURE. ADAM SCOTT WILL HELP YOU SEE THE PERFECT LINE EVERY TIME.**

its weaknesses is another easy way to save strokes. But how much time do you actually spend analyzing ball technology? Hey, don't sweat it—we've done the heavy lifting for you. To raise your orb I.Q. and find the right rock for your putting style, check out our comprehensive ball-fitting guide on p. 126.

This month, in our third installment of 2015 ClubTest, we rate the latest lines of **hybrids and fairways woods (p. 99)**, a must-read if you're in the market for a longer, higher ball flight. We also sit down with fan favorite **Fred Funk (p. 78)**,

who 10 years ago won the Players Championship—at 48! I love the Funkster's refreshing approach to the game. “I just hit it in play, keep the ball in front of me and try to take advantage of my opportunities,” he says. “You can still play that way.”

Even if you can't (yet) read greens.

**He's No. 1—at reading greens on Tour.**



*David M. Clarke*  
David M. Clarke, Editor

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Chief Executive Officer: Joseph Ripp

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Suite 206, Lake Orion, MI 48362  
(248) 690-7013; jay@rpmassoc.com

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30326; (404) 364-4043, fax (404) 364-4049;  
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Club Dr., Suite B #540, Simi Valley, CA 93065;  
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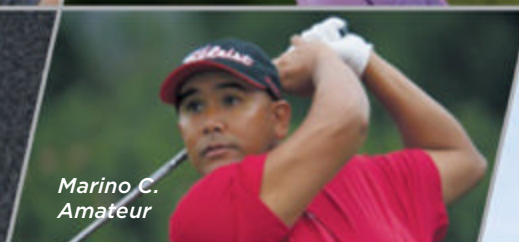
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## TEEING OFF

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### THE YOUNG & THE FEARLESS

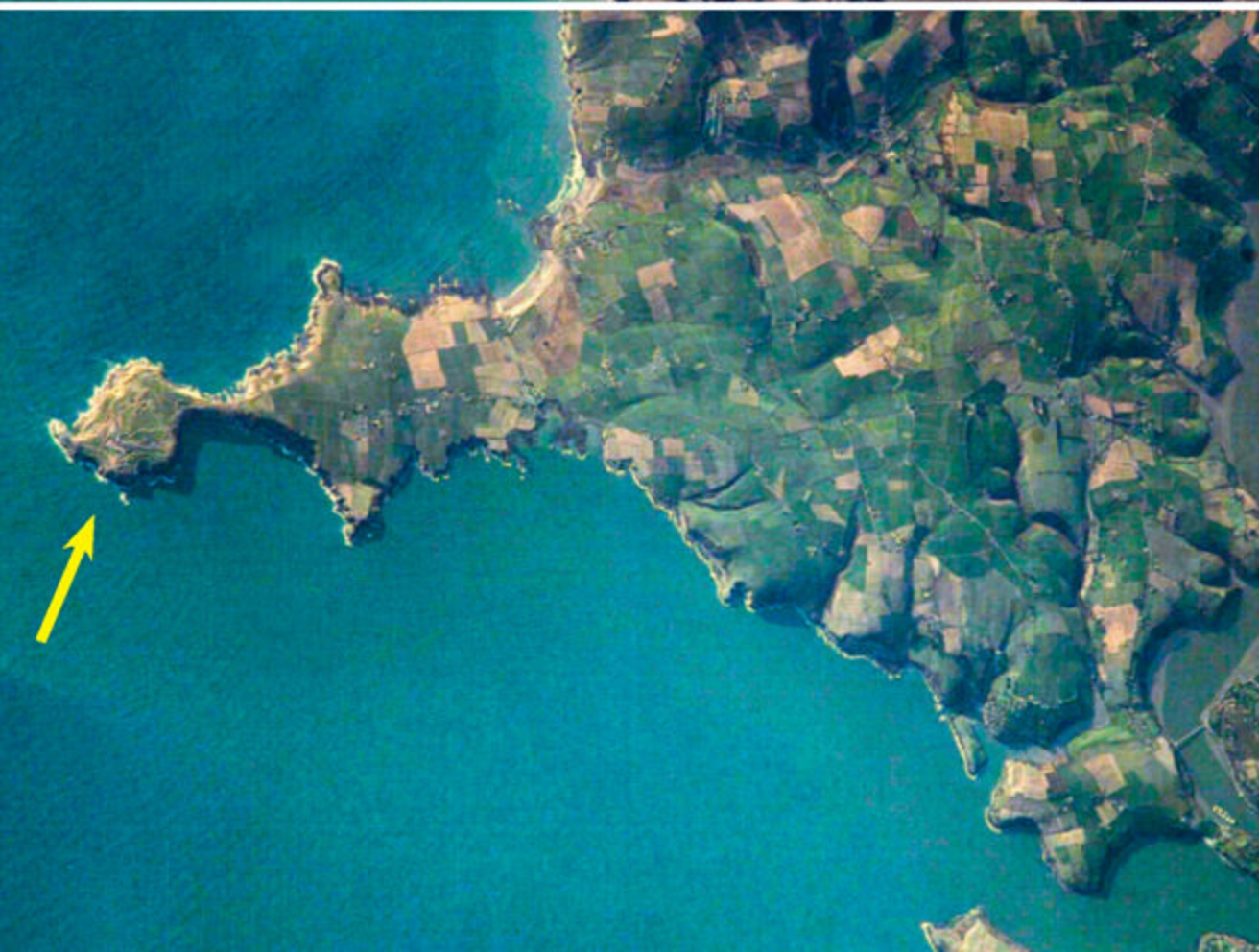
■ The game's future is in capable hands—and the present looks pretty good too. Jordan Spieth, 21, celebrates his playoff win over Patrick Reed, 24 (and Sean O'Hair, not pictured), at the Valspar Championship in March. Spieth won the sudden-death clash for his second PGA Tour title, making him the fourth player since 1940 to win twice on Tour before turning 22. For his part, Reed is already one of four players in the last quarter century to notch four wins before age 25. "Guess it was my day," Spieth said. And now, it appears, it's his and Reed's time.

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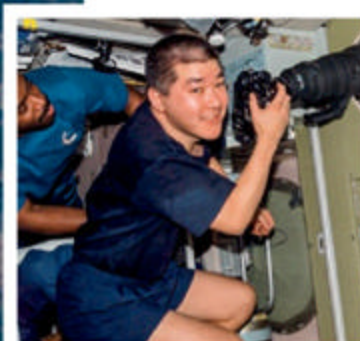
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## TEEING OFF



## OUT OF THIS WORLD

■ Course photographers are always looking for unique vantage points, but Daniel Tani (above) has them all beat. During a four-month stay on the International Space Station in 2006-07, the golf-loving astronaut used his downtime to snap courses, including (clockwise, from top right) Bandon Dunes in Oregon; an Arnold Palmer design at the Four Seasons in Costa Rica; Old Head, on a sliver of land in southwest Ireland; and cliffhanging Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand. The space station orbits the earth at 17,000 miles per hour, which left Tani only 10 seconds to frame, focus and shoot each subject. It's one small step for golf, one giant leap for golf photography.

PHOTOS: COURTESY  
OF DANIEL TANI



## TEEING OFF

### WHO NEEDS A HUG?

■ The island green—and all the pressure it brings to bear—awaits. This month, the Tour returns to the Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass, host of the Players Championship. No event tests a player's mettle quite like the Fifth Major. Just ask Martin Kaymer, who last year nearly blew a three-stroke lead in the waning moments. The German eventually prevailed by a stroke—momentum he rode to his U.S. Open win six weeks later—but first he had to drain a 28-footer for par on the 17th, then get up and down for par on the 18th. The effort earned him a much-deserved (and much-needed) bear hug from his caddie, Craig Connelly. Tune in May 7-10 for yet more spills and chills.

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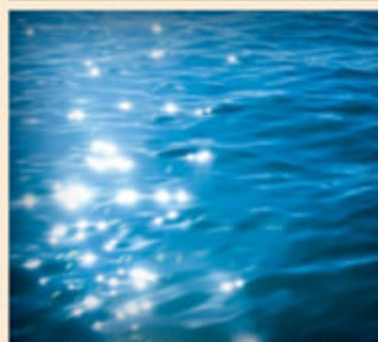
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# FRONT 9

THE MOST  
IMPORTANT  
THINGS  
IN GOLF  
THIS MONTH

*Edited by*  
JESSICA MARKSBURY

*Interview by*  
**Sean Zak**  
*Additional reporting by*  
**Gary Van Sickle**

*Portrait by*  
**Angus Murray**

## INTERVIEW

# BOO'S JUMP START

He leaped back into the winner's circle two years ago, rebooting his career with a slump-busting victory at Colonial. So why is **BOO WEEKLEY** planning his retirement?

**This month, you'll tee it up at the Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial, where you ended a four-year winless drought in 2013. How did you get it done that week?**

I did about the same thing I'm doing now—struggling a bit, with the ball going in every direction. [Laughs] Everything seemed to come together at Colonial. I stayed patient, knowing I hadn't been hitting it good anyway, so if I missed the cut, no big deal. I'd just go home and go fishing. And I won.

**Your dry spell lasted from 2009 to 2013. What was that period like?**

It was depressing. I had a lot of doubt. I didn't believe in what I was trying to execute. Then, finally, everything got to clicking. At Colonial, I played four rounds in the zone, and I made a couple of putts, which gave me some confidence. I've always been a streaky putter, but that week, me and my caddie were seeing all the lines. He'd say, "Hit it right here," and I'd hit it there, and it'd go right in. That was all there was to it.



## BOO WEEKLEY

**You turn 42 in July. Have you achieved everything you wanted to as a professional golfer?**

I ain't reachin'. The Lord has blessed me to play this game. I'm going to try to play it as long as I can. But at the same time, I want to be able to watch my kids grow up, so I've gotten to where I'm a little more mild, and I don't take golf as seriously as I did in the earlier years of my career. I want to play the Tour until I'm 46, 47, and then take about three years off, and then go play the Champions Tour when I'm 50. That's the plan, but you never know—it all depends on how good the fishing and hunting is. [Laughs]

**You rode your driver like a bucking bronco, Happy Gilmore—style, at the 2008 Ryder Cup at Valhalla. Is that a common celebratory move for you?**

No. That was a one-hit wonder. *Happy Gilmore* was on TV after a practice round. I was laughing and said, "I'm gonna do that," just joking around. We played the first couple of days, and it never registered in my mind. But when I walked to the tee box and grabbed my driver to warm up [on Sunday], it hit me. I was like "This would be a perfect time for this." Once I got set in there and waggled, I said, "If I can get it over that tree, I'm gonna take off and do it." Sure enough, I hit it and it went right like I drew it up. And I took off, ridin' it.

**You seem at peace. What's your secret to contentment?**

I love the outdoors and looking at snakes, squirrels, bugs—just going through the woods and being part of it. You can smell the different trees. And I listen. There's so much you can learn by listening, by sitting and watching things happen. Hey, it ain't all just about hunting and killing.

**What's the most memorable experience you've had in the woods?**

Well, I've had a bunch of accidents. If you hunt, you're gonna have some accidents. And I was turkey hunting once when a rattlesnake came up between my legs. I fell asleep, woke up, and there was a rattlesnake right there on me. And once when I was bow hunting, I found a snake with a rabbit in its mouth. I picked it up, put it in the back of the truck and got it mounted. I've still got that at the house.

**You're considered one of the most fan-friendly Tour pros. How do you feel about autograph requests?**

That's the coolest thing about playing on the Tour. It's one thing to be doing your job inside the ropes and have somebody ask you to sign something. But when you're [off the course] just being your common self, it's an honor to say, "I can sign something for you," or to take a picture with a kid. I love it.

**You're also hugely popular with your peers, even though your background is very different than most players'.**

**You had a rural upbringing in the Florida Panhandle, and even wrestled an orangutan once. How do you connect with your fellow pros?**

I don't have a lot in common with guys out here, but I reckon we get along because I don't take stuff as seriously as everybody else. I take my game seriously, but we're out here working together, so why not enjoy it and have fun? Why not talk and joke? There's a lot of situations where we can talk and have fun. Not a lot of them hunt and fish, but we find something to joke about.

**You've won \$12.5 million on Tour. How much more will it take for you to gallop off to new pastures?**

I'd say \$8 million more, by the time I'm 45, 46. If I can stay out here that long and stay healthy, I'll be close to that number and then ride off into the sunset. Actually, I'll probably paddle off into the sunset in a boat. ■



Weekley horses around at the '08 Ryder Cup.

## Boo Weekley: Three Things I Know for Sure

**Live your life in the moment.**

Without question, the best advice I ever received was from my Granddaddy. I remember him telling me to just take life one day at a time. It's simple. You've got to take it easy. Don't be in a hurry to get wherever you want to go, because time—and life—will pass you by.

**Expand your target area off the tee.**

The best part of my game has always been my driving. I'm good at it, but it doesn't have to be so difficult if you're not great off the tee. I've played in a lot of pro-ams. Amateurs should try choosing bigger targets in the fairway. Give yourself 15 to 20 yards of leeway, instead of trying to hit the narrowest little landing area. Some extra room on either side will help you in case you over-cut or over-draw it. That way, you're still in the fairway if you miss.

**Southerners are smarter than you think.**

The biggest misconception people have about the South is that we're all a bunch of dumb folks. We really aren't. There's more to us than that. My Ma and Pa taught me to treat people the way you'd want to be treated, and be yourself doing it. It ain't a front!

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## THE RULES

## ASK THE RULES GUY

GOT A RULE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND? ASK THE RULES GUY—HE WON'T THROW THE BOOK AT YOU!



## SKATE BALL

**Rules Guy:** My group was first out after a short frost delay, and it was so cold that the greens were like ice rinks. Before hitting an approach, I went up and tapped my putter on the green. My opponent said I lost the hole because I “tested the surface” before I hit my shot. Is this guy right? —Ken Heidelberg, Peachtree Corners, Ga.

**A** Figure-skating is my second-favorite sport. So many rules! (Jim Furyk should be glad that golf doesn't deduct from your score for technical mistakes.) Per Rule 16-1d, testing any green by “rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface” is a no-no, punishable by two strokes or a loss of hole in match play. However, because you used your putter to tap, not scrape, the surface—and you didn't roll your ball—you skate away scot-free.

## HAZARD COUNTY

**Rules Man:** There's a hole on my course with out of bounds on the left and a lateral water hazard just beyond OB. I sliced my drive over the white markers and into the water. Is my drive considered OB, since it crossed the white stakes first? Or is it simply played as having entered the lateral water hazard? —Mike Davis, Crestview, Fla.

**A** That's one hazardous hole. OB, water, then...a moat of crocodiles ringing the green? As to your question, the USGA defines “out of bounds” as a ball that *lies* entirely out of bounds. When your ball comes to rest in a water hazard, it's exactly that: in the hazard, not out of bounds. If your ball takes aerial photos of the OB area before landing elsewhere on the course, all that matters is where your ball lies. And in this case, it lies beneath.

## GROUND CONTROL

**Rules Dude:** I entered a greenside bunker and placed my putter down next to me, in the trap, before hitting my sand shot. My competitor called me out for grounding my club in a hazard. I feel that I did nothing wrong, because I wasn't using my putter for the shot. What's your call? —Tony Griffin, Parker, Colo.

**A** Breathe easy, Tony. While Rule 13-4 forbids grounding your club at address in a hazard (to the tune of a two-stroke penalty in stroke play), Exception 1 lets you place clubs in a hazard without punishment, as long as you do nothing that improves your lie or constitutes testing the hazard condition.

## TUFT LUCK

**Hey Rules Man:** My ball was perched on a tuft of grass. As I prepared to make a stroke, I noticed it was oscillating, but I hit it anyway. Am I in the clear? —John Formy-Duval, Durham, N.C.

**A** Have you considered a career as a golf trick-shot artist? There's no penalty for making a stroke at an oscillating ball. Decision 14-5/2 clarifies that oscillation is not “movement,” so give your guilty conscience a reprieve on this one.

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can watch video rulings featuring Rules Guy himself! Go to [golf.com/rules-guy](http://golf.com/rules-guy)

## Got a Rules question?

Of course you do! Whatever it may be, send yours to [rulesguy@golf.com](mailto:rulesguy@golf.com) and the question may be answered in an upcoming issue of *Golf Magazine*. Until then, play by the Rules!



Golf Magazine Top 100 Teacher & CBS Sports Analyst

PETER KOSTIS

## EMBRACE THE GOLFER WITHIN

Instruction has become too reliant on high-tech bells and whistles. Here's the individualized approach your swing needs.

**H**ere are 10 names you should know: Bob Toski, Claude Harmon, Sam Snead, Paul Runyan, Henry Picard, Byron Nelson, John Jacobs, Henry Cotton, Tommy Armour and Mac O'Grady. What do they have in common? They were all exceptional players, but they were all also world-class teachers. Successful professionals turned teachers—that's not something you see anymore. Why?

All but O'Grady played in an era when tournament winnings alone weren't enough to make a great living. They had to augment their incomes by being club pros, which meant giving lessons to the members of the clubs where they practiced and played. It wasn't until Toski created a series of golf schools (where I got started in the 1970s, incidentally) that it became viable to earn a living as a teacher. From that point on, golf instruction was never the same.

These days, people love to comment on the state of Tiger Woods's swing or on modern-day instruction. The vast majority of those people have never given a lesson. They're entitled to their opinions, of course, but to my ears those views ring hollow because these so-called experts have never stood on a driving range for 10 hours in the sun helping golfers fix their golf swing or improve their tempo. The teachers mentioned above did—and many of them won major championships, too! And they still found time to help regular people improve their games.

To me, the days of the "player-teacher" are clearly over. The money in today's game has all but ensured this. The troubling thing? As I see it, the evolution in teaching is veering away from its purest form. Instead of helping

Like Bubba's move, your swing can be unorthodox but effective.



people play better, we try to teach them how to swing the club better, or hit the ball better (using launch monitors). Playing, swinging and hitting are three very different art forms.

We need to get golfers back to *playing* better, especially everyday golfers like you. I may sound like a grumpy old man, but the way golf is taught has changed, and not necessarily for the better. Today, students learn the game in pristine conditions, and they strive to copy the technically perfect swings of Tour stars like Adam Scott and Rory McIlroy. What's more, recreational golfers are taught with lie boards, range mats and launch monitors in an effort to help them make perfect contact—but they're only learning to make one swing and hit one shot. People say you can't curve the ball anymore. Well, they're wrong. You can, if you learn to swing your way and with a little feel. If you copy one "perfect" swing, you're limited to hitting one type of shot.

The 10 player-teachers I mentioned earlier taught their students how to think, imagine, visualize and feel: to be the best *they* can be, not to be like somebody else. Many teachers today try to fit every student into the same swing mold. Decades ago, before video or TrackMan, good teaching simply meant helping the student hit the ball toward the target to the best of his or her ability. This was a superior—and more individual—approach that accommodated every pupil's natural rhythm and tendencies.

Look at the swings of two top players, Bubba Watson and Jim Furyk. Have they tried to hone a textbook motion? Not at all. Still, their swings work just as well—and sometimes better—than Adam's or Rory's.

My advice: Don't fear being the best golfer that *you* can be. Swing *your* way. When you take lessons, make sure your teacher works to improve the swing and rhythm you have, rather than making you impersonate another player. Embrace your authentic swing. With time and work, the rest will fall into place. ■

### KOSTIS TIP: HOW TO PULVERIZE PRESSURE

This month, the Tour pros face the scariest hole in golf: the par-3 17th at TPC Sawgrass. A key to conquering this island hole is a mental-game principle that will help you on any course. Before you swing, accept that the outcome will be good or bad. Many recreational players stress and fret about a negative outcome. This leads to swing-killing tension—and the bad result they *didn't* want. A self-fulfilling prophecy! So take a deep breath and allow the acceptance of any result to wash over you. Now swing away, with nothing to lose and nothing to fear.

For more, visit [peterkostisgolf.com](http://peterkostisgolf.com).

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Golf Magazine's technical & short-game consultant

DAVE PELZ

## HERE'S MY PITCH FOR MORE LOFT

To hit higher, softer flop shots that can tame the slickest green, step up to a 64-degree wedge

A perfectly executed flop shot is a thing of beauty. But it's also a dangerous option, because you can catch it thin or heavy as easily as you can hit it flush, especially if your technique is rusty.

When I hit flops I always opt for a high-lofted wedge (usually my 588 Rotex II 64-degree model), and grip it with the face slightly open. I position the ball in the middle of my stance, aim slightly left of the target, and make a fuller-than-normal swing. This isn't complicated. It's mostly a matter of trust and, of course, practice.

If you're not hitting at least a dozen flop shots every time you visit the range, your technique is probably not ready for prime time. To know for sure, take the following test: Find a realistic flop-shot situation, something in the 20-yard range that requires you to carry an obstacle and gives you little room between the pin and the green's edge. You want a situation that looks something like the shot I'm facing in my backyard practice area in the photo on this page. Next, hit four flop shots straight at the pin, then hit four garden-variety pitches to the safest area of the green, alternating between flop and pitch with each ball. After hitting all eight balls, you'll know which shot more reliably gets you closer to your target. You'll also know if your flop shot is ready for the course. And there's one more benefit of this test: It lets you feel the difference between a regular pitch



My drill turns your flop shot into a stroke-saving scoring weapon.

swing and a flop swing, improving your comfort level with the latter.

### SOME NOTES ON LOFT

Chances are, you don't carry a 64-degree wedge, like I do. If that's true, you're doing yourself a big disfavor. I'm a huge fan of the 64-degree lobber. Think it's *too* much loft? Consider:

■ **Greens are only getting faster**, and unless you can stop shots as quickly as a Tour player can—and how many of us are that good?—you'll need maximum height to keep the ball from rolling off the green and into trouble.

■ **Superintendents at Tour venues are being pressured to keep greens in better shape.** To protect the putting surface, they're tucking pins near the edge more and more often. It's just a matter of time before this trend reaches your course. Your best defense? Pin-seeking shots that fly higher and land softer.

Hey, these are just the facts. So arm yourself. Higher wedge lofts can help your game, as I proved three decades ago by introducing 60-degree wedges. We all want higher pitches with less effort. Give a 64-degree wedge a shot. It'll save you strokes for years to come.

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MARK BROADIE: EVERY SHOT COUNTS



## HOW TO SURVIVE 'NO MAN'S LAND'

Here's why shots from 60 to 100 yards out are twice as important to you as they are to Tour pros—and how you can save strokes from this tricky distance

**A** question I'll bet you've never been asked: On average, how many shots per round does a Tour pro take from 60 to 100 yards from the hole? Four? Six? Ten?

The answer might surprise you. It's just 1.5! Why so few? On par 3s, pros rarely leave themselves a second shot from 60-100 yards. It's also unlikely to happen on par 4s, unless the hole is quite short—or quite long and the player hits a poor tee shot. And on par 5s, pros only occasionally lay up to the 60-to-100-yard range. This adds up to an average of 1.5 shots per round from this length.

With the pros hitting so few 60-to-100-yard shots, it's hard for them to gain ground on the field. It's also hard to be sharp on these shots when they do occur. The best in the business from that distance—by a wide margin—is Steve Stricker, who has gained nearly a quarter of a shot per round on the field in the past ten years. In 2014, Stricker led the PGA Tour, gaining 0.34 strokes per round on the field:

### PER ROUND FROM 60-100 YARDS IN 2014

Rank	Player	Strokes Gained
1	Steve Stricker	0.34
2	Tim Clark	0.18
3	Charl Schwartzel	0.17
4	Zach Johnson	0.16
5	Jason Day	0.15

Stricker's gain doesn't seem like much, but compare it to Jason Day, who ranks fifth and picks up a measly 0.15 strokes on the field.

These 60-to-100 yarders (which are often less than full wedge shots) matter

much more to recreational players. Guys like you and me average 3.2 of these shots per round, about double the pros' number. Yes, this distance range is less important for scoring

**Rather than trying to knock down the flag, I suggest a simple goal from this length: Just get the ball on the green.**

than shots closer to the green, because pros and everyday players take three to four times as many shots from just off the green than they do from 60 to 100 yards. Still, that doesn't mean you shouldn't practice from No Man's Land. This column is called "Every Shot Counts" for a reason.

Not surprisingly, weekend warriors aren't very accurate or consistent with shots from this distance compared to Tour pros. Consider: On an 80-yard shot from the fairway, Steve Stricker leaves half of his efforts within 11 feet of the hole, and a typical Tour pro knocks it to 13 feet. For 80-shooters, half of their shots finish within 23 feet of the hole, while 90-shooters leave half within 31 feet. Why does this matter? Well, 90-shooters could save a half stroke per round if they improved to the level of 80-shooters from this range. (I admit, a half stroke doesn't sound like much, but these swings are worthy of attention. Bonus: You look like a real stick when you knock a three-quarter wedge to tap-in range!)

Rather than trying to knock down the flag with these shots, though, I'd



Stricker is the Tour's best on shots from 60 to 100 yards.

suggest you focus on a simpler goal: Just get the ball on the green. Pros find the dance floor about 90 percent of the time on fairway shots from 60 to 100 yards out. For 80-shooters, it's 78 percent. Ninety-shooters only hold the green 65 percent of the time.

To measure how your game stacks up from this range, here's a drill: Hit five shots from the fairway, one each from 60, 70, 80, 90 and 100 yards (in that order). Your objective is to end up with at least four of the five balls on the green. Next, measure the distance of your middle shot, ignoring the two closest and two farthest from the hole. Remember, Steve Stricker's average distance is 11 feet, but a good goal for recreational players is 25 feet or less.

To sharpen your swing from this distance, here are some tips from veteran instructor Terry Rowles, who has taught several PGA Tour pros, including Mike Weir and Ben Crane. ■

### HOW TO HIT YOUR SHORT WEDGES CLOSE

"Recreational players tend to make inconsistent contact using their wedges, which leads to distance errors. Quality impact is the key to success on these short shots. The first step is to take a solid setup, with your weight slightly forward, your hands a little ahead of the ball, and a slightly open stance. A too-flat swing plane leads to mishits. Your flat-swing fix? Imagine that your shaft is filled with water, and that you want to let the liquid trickle out the butt end of the the shaft as soon as possible in your backswing. To do so, feel as though the club is almost standing on end as you take it back. A good setup and a more vertical swing plane will have you flag-hunting in no time."

**Terry Rowles was named one of Golf Magazine's "Innovators of the Year" in 2013.**

### ASK MARK!

Got a stats question for Mark Broadie, best-selling author of *Every Shot Counts*? Ask him via Twitter: @MarkBroadie



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# Trophy On Tour

The U.S. Open Trophy is taking the scenic route to Chambers Bay, giving golf fans a chance to share in the championship's tradition during its coast-to-coast trek

The U.S. Open Championship will venture into new territory this June, when the ultimate test in golf heads to the Pacific Northwest for the first time. Much of the fanfare kicks off well before a champion is crowned at Chambers Bay, as the U.S. Open Trophy covers new ground, traveling across the country before arriving in University Place, Wash.

While most people on the East Coast will take cross-country flights to see the U.S. Open, the U.S. Open Trophy itself will take a long, winding road to the West Coast. The two-month-long U.S. Open Trophy Tour will start in late April in New York City and make several fan-friendly stops on the way to Chambers Bay.

The tour kick-starts the third anniversary of the USGA's "Open For All" engagement programming, which welcomes the golf-loving community to share in the tradition and spirit of the U.S. Open beyond the gates. This year's national Trophy Tour offers no shortage of exciting opportunities to do just that. The trophy will target stops at Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer stadiums, and even a U.S. Open sectional qualifying event on June 8, commonly known as "Golf's Longest Day." With Fox Sports as the USGA's new domestic broadcast partner, one can also expect to see the trophy make a live TV appearance or two along its journey.

Fans will be able to engage with the trophy through socially shareable photo opportunities. Special contests and incentives will complement online activity and enhance the buzz behind the trophy's travels. Fan photos taken and posted on Twitter with the #usopenforall hashtag will be aggregated and displayed on a U.S. "Open for All" microsite, and fans who post their photos will be eligible to win prizes and premiums.



Competitors from the 2014 U.S. Open local qualifier in Greensboro, N.C., pose with the U.S. Open Trophy during a stop along the way to last year's U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2.

Golf fans in and around Seattle and Tacoma will have their first chance to see the trophy in late May. It will be on-site at Chambers Bay beginning on June 14

Fans will be able to engage with the trophy through socially shareable photo opportunities.

to coincide with the celebration of Flag Day. On June 16, the trophy will be on display for the Bob Jones Award Ceremony

in downtown Tacoma, where Barbara Nicklaus will receive the USGA's highest honor, recognizing sportsmanship, character and contributions to the game. The final stop on the tour will be in Seattle, where it will be displayed for the entirety of the USGA's viewing party and fan celebration, the U.S. "Open For All" Fan Experience, from June 17-21.

Along with the opportunity to capture a photo with the U.S. Open Trophy, the U.S. "Open For All" Fan Experience will bring the championship to the fans via an interactive and immersive program, including live streaming of the U.S. Open, an on-site broadcast booth, interactive exhibits for all ages and cuisine from the Seattle-Tacoma region.

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## SWING SEQUENCE

## WATCH &amp; LEARN

Former Masters champion Zach Johnson beats the big hitters with his highly efficient swing. Use his moves to become automatic off the tee.

Zach's weight is toward his toes at address, for an athletic setup.



His shaft points at the target line during the takeaway—perfect.



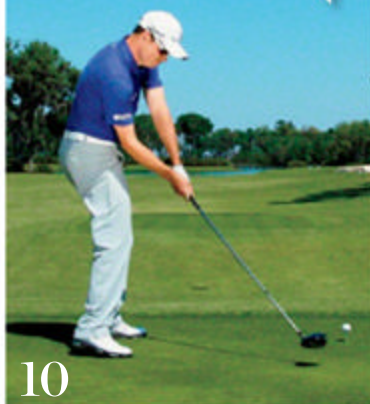
Halfway back, the shaft is parallel to the target line. Textbook stuff.



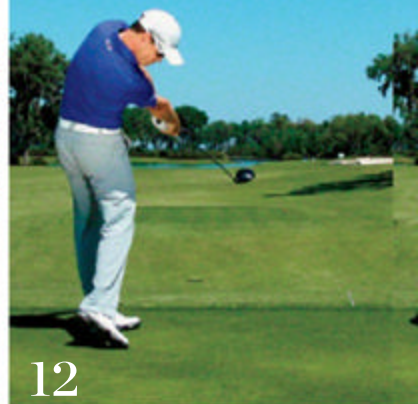
You want your hands at waist height when your knees return to where they were at address.



**Scan this photo**  
to see Zach's swing in pure slow motion. See p. 12.



Yep, Zach's shaft remains on plane and pointing at the target line.



## GOLF.COM

Watch dozens of PGA Tour stars hit the shots you need at [golf.com/sequences](http://golf.com/sequences)

Analysis by Top 100 Teacher **MIKE BENDER**  
*Mike Bender Golf Academy, Magnolia Plantation G.C., Lake Mary, Fla.*



Zach Johnson isn't the strongest guy on Tour—he tied for 141st in driving distance last year. But plenty of bombers would trade careers with the 39-year-old. His 11 victories, including the 2007 Masters, are 11th most among active players, tied with Adam Scott. Not bad for a guy who drives it 11 yards less than the Tour average.

His secret is efficiency. I've worked with many pros, and few squeeze more energy from their swing than Zach does. Notice in the photos above how the shaft points at the target line (or an extension of the target line)

# STATISTICS

Stats from the 2014 PGA Tour

## THE LINE ON ZACH

**70.5%**  
Driving Accuracy

**6th**  
Driving Accuracy Rank

**24th**  
Strokes Gained Tee-to-Green

**28th**  
Scoring



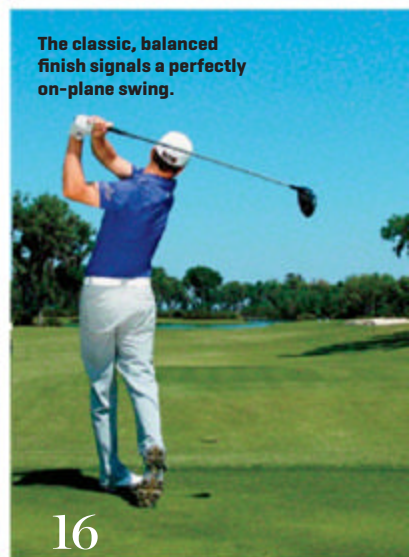
His arm swing and body turn stop at the same time. This is a must!



Just as it did going back, the shaft points at the target line as he starts down.



Zach's hips open and his arms keep pace for an efficient, on-plane delivery.



The classic, balanced finish signals a perfectly on-plane swing.

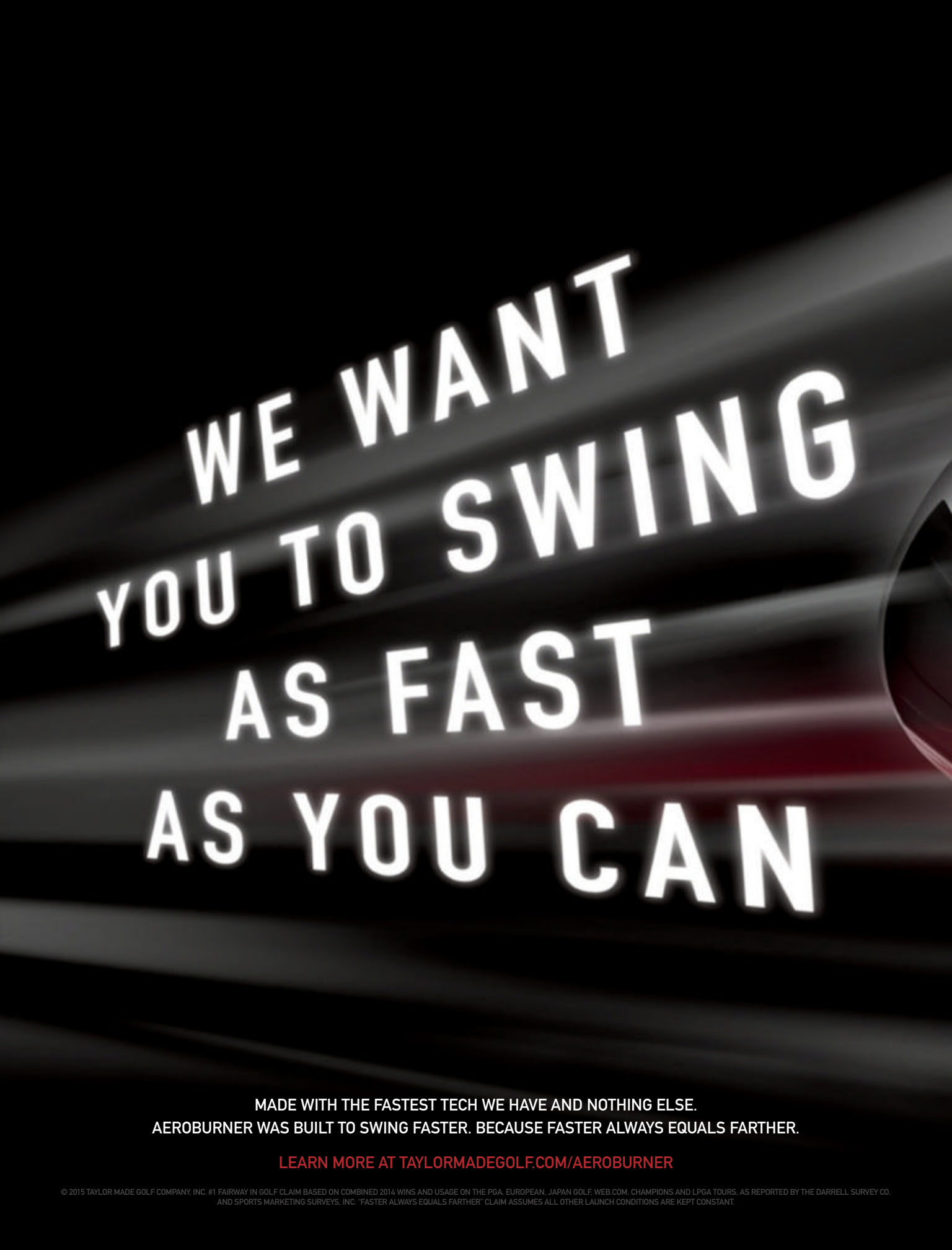
throughout his motion, except at mid-backswing (frame 3), at the top (6) and in his follow-through (12), where the shaft points parallel to the target line. This defines “on plane,” and it’s how Zach transfers maximum energy to the ball without swinging out of his spikes.

Coordination fuels this efficiency. Zach synchronizes his body turn with the swinging of his arms. His body and arms work in harmony, so the club never gets “stuck” behind him, nor does it release too soon. The result: dead-center contact. You can’t steal Tour-pro power, but you can steal Zach’s swing keys to get on plane and strike it better than ever.

Sequence photography and portrait by ANGUS MURRAY



Control Zach Johnson’s swing with the swipe of a finger on the iPad and tablet editions of *Golf Magazine*. Visit [golf.com/allaccess](http://golf.com/allaccess).



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## FIX YOUR SLICE



**JOSEPH HALLETT**  
Vanderbilt  
Legends Club,  
Franklin, Tenn.  
[Top 100 since 2011]



## To Kill Your Slice, It's Palms Away!

*This easy drill helps you groove an on-plane backswing and square clubface at the top*

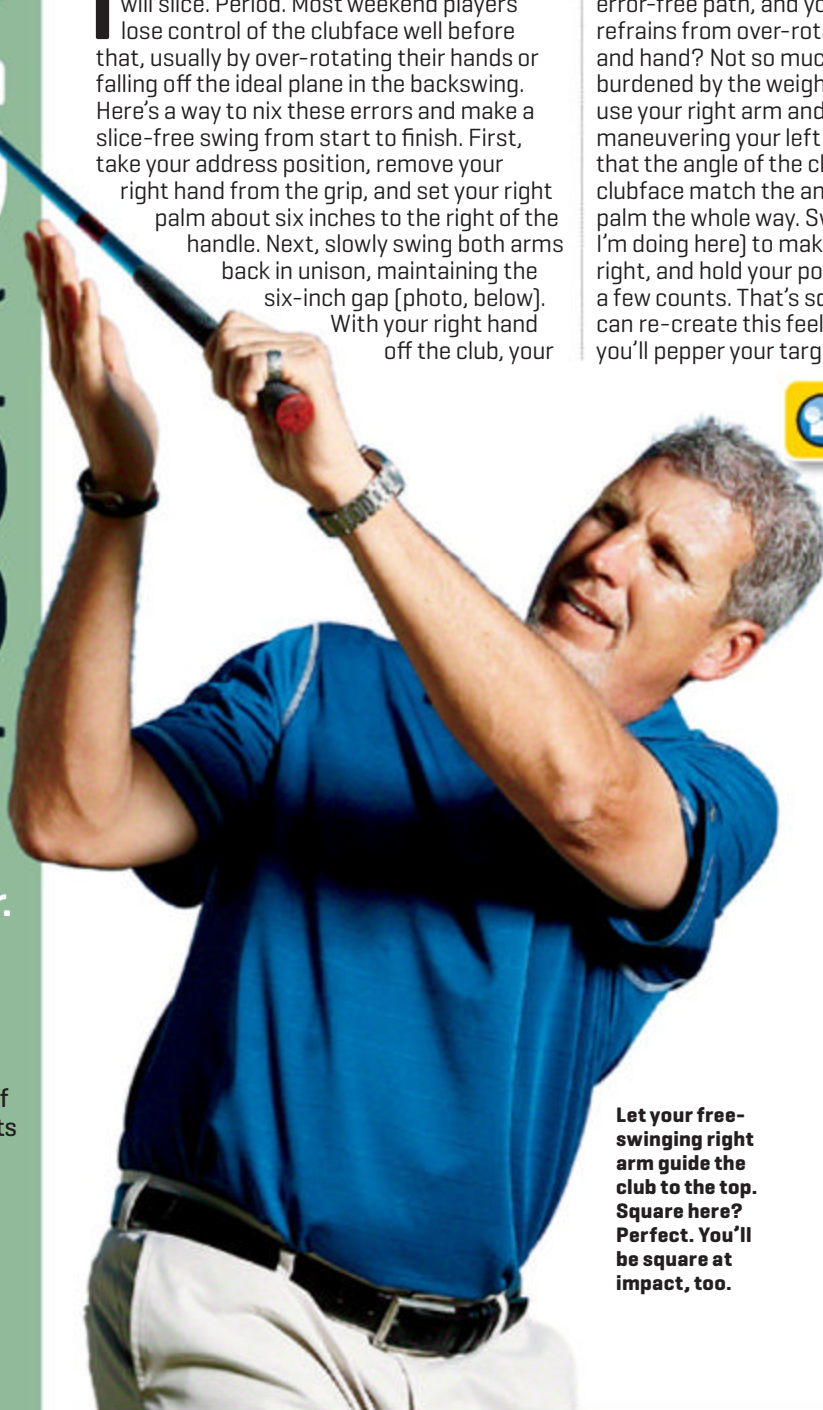
If the clubface is open at impact, the ball will slice. Period. Most weekend players lose control of the clubface well before that, usually by over-rotating their hands or falling off the ideal plane in the backswing. Here's a way to nix these errors and make a slice-free swing from start to finish. First, take your address position, remove your right hand from the grip, and set your right palm about six inches to the right of the handle. Next, slowly swing both arms back in unison, maintaining the six-inch gap [photo, below].

With your right hand off the club, your

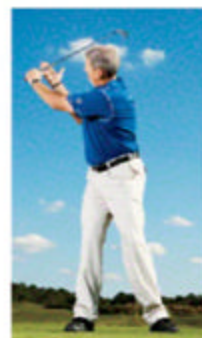
right arm naturally traces a smooth, error-free path, and your right hand refrains from over-rotating. Your left arm and hand? Not so much, because they're burdened by the weight of the club. So use your right arm and palm as guides, maneuvering your left arm and hand so that the angle of the clubshaft and the clubface match the angle of your right palm the whole way. Swivel your head (like I'm doing here) to make sure you get it right, and hold your position at the top for a few counts. That's square, baby! If you can re-create this feeling on real swings, you'll pepper your targets all day long.



**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12.



**Set your right palm about six inches from the grip...**



**Let your free-swinging right arm guide the club to the top. Square here? Perfect. You'll be square at impact, too.**

**...and check that the angle of the shaft, clubface and your right palm match up.**



WATCH THIS ON YOUR IPAD OR TABLET.  
VISIT [GOLF.COM/ALLACCESS](http://GOLF.COM/ALLACCESS).

**CHUCK EVANS**

Tiffany Greens G.C.,  
Kansas City, Mo.  
[Top 100 since 2009]



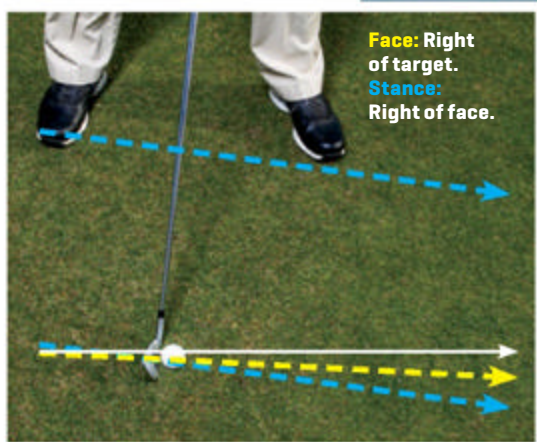
# The New Way to Hit Power Draws

*Back-left pin? No sweat! Use this state-of-the-art setup and sling it right to left.*

**D**o you dream of drawing the ball, but your reality is a steady diet of fades and pulls? The likely problem: You follow outdated instruction concepts. The old way tells you to point your clubface at the target and align your stance out to the right. You've got the stance part correct, but science has proven that your shots start where your clubface points at impact, not where your path and body are aimed. This means that at address, you're not aiming your clubface far enough to the right.

The old way of drawing the ball didn't allow for the big influence that face angle has on starting direction. Aim the face right of the target, not at the target, to pull off a high, arcing draw.

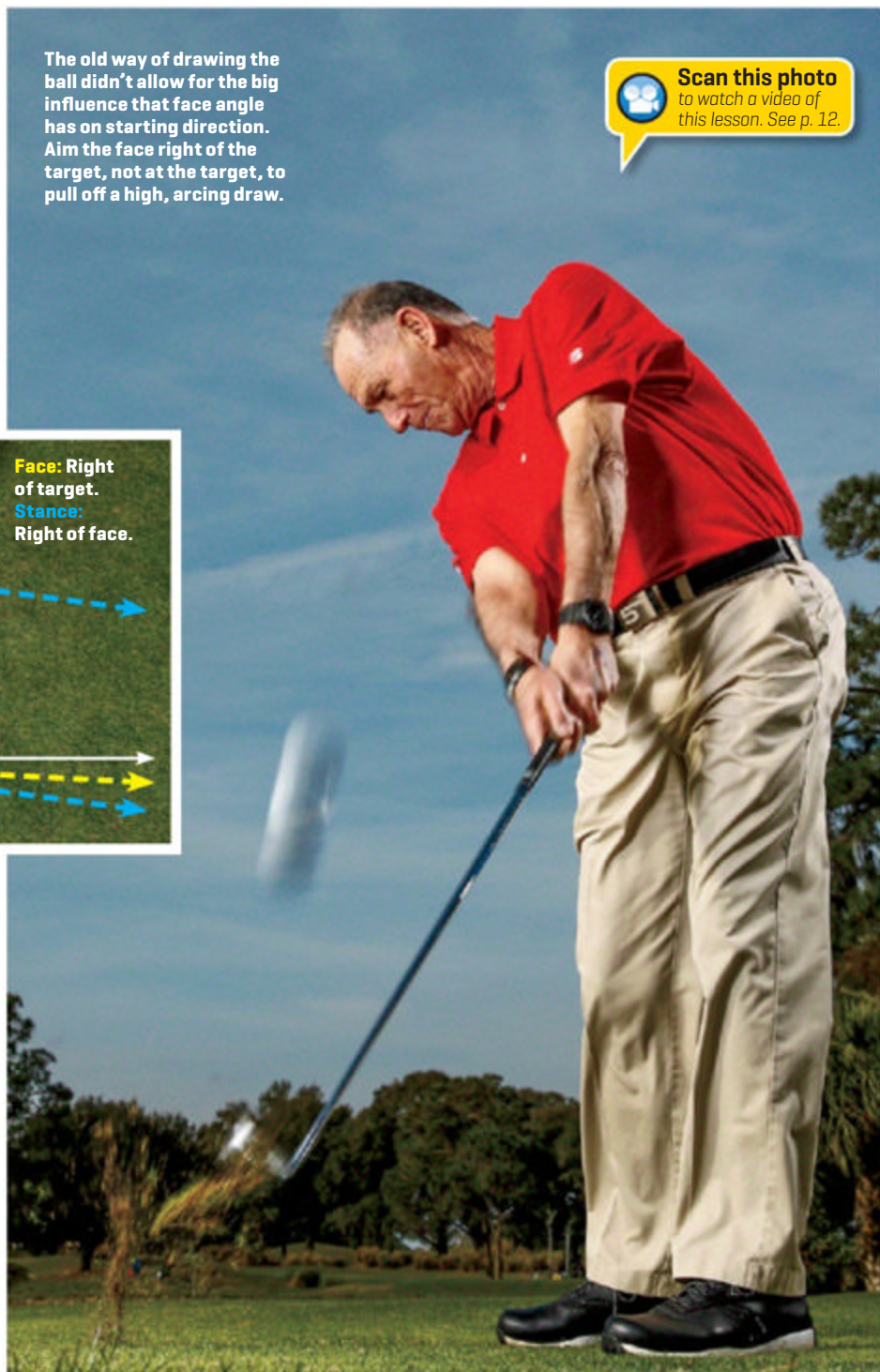
**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12.



## HOW TO DRAW UP A DRAW

1. Point your clubface a few degrees to the right of your target, not at the target [yellow line, above].
2. Point your stance line [picture a line across the toe of each shoe] even farther right of where the clubface is aimed [blue lines].

Now simply swing. No need to worry about coming from the inside or rotating your wrists. Since your setup geometry is correct—and a match for modern ball-flight laws—the ball will draw, as if by magic.



ANGUS MURRAY (3)





## IT'S IN THE DETAILS.

---

You know every inch of your bike. Not just the engine size, or the color code of the paint. It's the special details that only you know about. Like the way the exhaust opens up just right at 3,200rpm. Or that scuff on the footpeg you picked up while riding through Deal's Gap.

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**BRADY RIGGS**

Woodley Lakes G.C.  
Van Nuys, Calif.  
[Top 100 since 2009]



# Lose Your Rock for a Better Roll

*Quiet your head and shoulder movement for pure strikes on the greens*

If you're a head case when you putt, chances are it has nothing to do with your mental game or confidence. The problem is your head—literally. That noggin of yours is likely moving all over the place when you putt, and this excess head movement forces you to swing up on the ball through impact. An ascending path is bad news when you're trying to hole putts; it shifts your strike point away from the sweet spot to the bottom of the putterface. You'll never get a consistent roll this way, and your ball will tend to stop well short of the hole.

The fix? Unfortunately, it's not as simple as "keep your head still." This is because the real culprit here is your shoulders, which rock more than they should, pulling your head back and forth in the process (inset photo, right). You never see Adam Scott or Steve Stricker putt with a whole lot of body action. For them, everything from the chest on up is very quiet.

Here's the quickest solution for a weekend player: At setup, pin the upper part of your left arm tight to the left side of your torso (main photo, right) and maintain this connection throughout your stroke. And instead of rocking your shoulders, try to rotate them, as you would on a full swing. Obviously, this turn is much subtler than the one you would make with your driver, but it makes a big difference, eliminating your rocking shoulders and swaying head.

To make sure you're doing it correctly, practice putting with the sun at your back, and monitor the shadow cast by your head. The longer it remains in the same place, the purer your strike will be.



**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12.

**At address, pin  
your upper-left  
arm to your chest  
for a smooth, rock-  
free shoulder turn.**



**A rocking stroke creates too much of an upward strike.**



**Less rock helps you keep your head still for cleaner contact.**



ANGUS MURRAY (4)



WATCH THIS ON YOUR IPAD OR TABLET.  
VISIT [GOLF.COM/ALLACCESS](http://GOLF.COM/ALLACCESS).

**BERNIE NAJAR**

Caves Valley G.C.,  
Owings Mills, Md.  
[Top 100 since 2015]



**NEW**  
**TOP 100**  
**TEACHER!**

# Release the Pounds!

*Try this special tee-shot trigger and pummel your drives like never before*

**Y**ou're on the tee waiting for the group in front of you to clear, so you pass the time swinging your driver back and forth several times in a row. Ever notice how smooth and effortless those swings feel compared with your regular move? That's the power of continuous motion. The feeling is hard to replicate when it counts, because you start real swings from a static address position. To help, start your swing with a forward motion—think of it as an exaggerated forward press—to get those driving juices flowing. Here's a drill to make it second nature. With better fluidity, you'll bomb it every time.

**START**

Take your address position and hover the clubhead above the ground (right).

**STEP 1**

Swing the clubhead over the ball and a few feet toward the target, then immediately start your backswing (below, left). This induces a slight pressure shift into your left foot, encouraging a similar pressure shift into your right foot as you swing the club back.

**STEP 2**

At the top (below, middle), reverse the pressure once again, this time from your right foot to your left foot.

**STEP 3**

Finally, enjoy the power boost you get as you release through impact.



ANGUS MURRAY (5)

Swing  
forward...

...swing back...

...and  
release!



**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12.



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**E.A. TISCHLER**Olympia Fields C.C.,  
Olympia Fields, Ill.  
(Top 100 since 2015)**NEW  
TOP 100  
TEACHER!**

# Loft Perfect Pitches as High as You Like

*My hinge-and-return trick is automatic near the green*

**O**ne of the keys to playing great short-game shots is making sure you're set up to produce the correct shot trajectory, whether you're

going for a lob that stops quickly, a medium-high pitch that "checks and walks up" to the hole, or a low runner. Basically, it's a matter of ball position and shaft lean [top sequence, below]. Easy stuff. The hard part is delivering the clubhead to the ball on the correct angle of attack so that it flies without

veering offline. A lot can go wrong, even in small short-game strokes, so I developed a way that makes it pretty much foolproof. All you have to do is hinge your wrists during your backswing and then return to your address position while "posting up" on your left leg. Here's what it looks like.



**LOW SHOT**  
Ball back, off your right foot, and hands in the center, so the shaft leans toward the target.



**MID SHOT**  
Ball slightly back of center and hands over the ball, for just a hint of shaft lean.



**HIGH SHOT**  
Ball off flared left foot. Hands in the center, so the shaft leans away from the target.

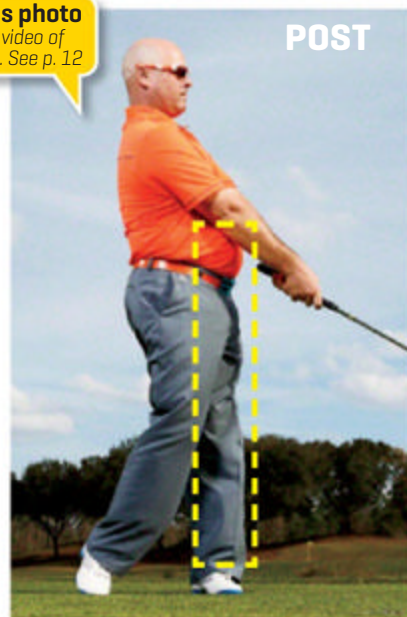


**HINGE**  
Swing the clubhead back without losing your address posture. Your goal? Hinge either your wrists, your right elbow or both. The idea is to get the clubhead above your hands as quickly as possible.



**RETURN**  
As you start down, extend your right arm back to its starting position, unhinging your elbow, wrists or both. As you do this, start applying pressure on the ground with your left foot.

**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12



**POST**  
Use the pressure under your left foot to "post up" on your left leg, releasing the club down and through the ball as you turn toward the target. You want the shaft out in front of you at the finish.

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#15

TEE BOX  
DISTANCE

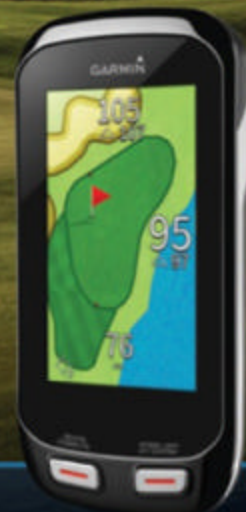
155 YDS

PLAYS LIKE  
DISTANCE

143 YDS

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Approach G8



**JAMIE MULLIGAN**  
Virginia C.C.  
Long Beach, Calif.  
[Top 100 since 2015]



**NEW  
TOP 100  
TEACHER!**

# Start Your Swing the Smart Way

*Learn the better-player's secret to picture-perfect takeaways*

**G**ood ballstrikers have several things in common. One of them is a good “moveaway” at the start of the swing. I call it a moveaway, rather than a takeaway, because you want to *move* the club in a coordinated motion with your body, not simply take it away with your arms. If you do the latter, the club could end up either too far in front of your body or too far behind your body. This disconnect is the fast track to slices, hooks and everything bad in between.

What does a good moveaway look like? Let one of my star students show you. LPGA and Symetra Tour player Veronica Felibert paints a perfect picture [right]. Notice how the length of her arm swing matches the degree of turn in her upper body. Everything is synced up and moving in unison. Veronica and I work on this constantly in practice, and you should also focus on it. The secret is in your stomach and right arm.

**STOMACH** It's time for a “gut check.” Think of your stomach as the engine that powers your backswing. Once you settle into your address position, engage your core muscles and turn your midsection to the right. Since your shoulders, chest and hips are tied to your core, everything will move away in one piece, almost automatically.

**RIGHT ARM** Keep your arm as loose and passive as possible, almost as though it's simply dangling at your side. This immediately nixes any yank or lifting action from your moveaway, helping you get off to an on-plane start. It also helps your right arm fold naturally as you swing to the top, putting you in a position to hit powerful iron shots that soar exactly where you want them to.

**“You want to move the club in a coordinated motion with your body, not simply take it away with your arms.”**



**Keep your right arm loose and passive.**

**Be like LPGA star Veronica Felibert: Use your core muscles, not your hands and arms, to take the club away.**

**Scan this photo** to watch a video of this lesson. See p. 12.

ANGUS MURRAY (2)





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Talamore C.C.,  
Ambler, Pa.  
(Top 100 since 2011)



## Your Can't-Miss Ball-Position Guide

*Hit wedge shots closer by setting up as though you're bombing a drive*

**T**wo of the greatest drivers of all time, Ben Hogan and Jack Nicklaus, both played the ball well forward in their stance—Hogan an inch back from his left heel and Nicklaus off his heel. You can't argue with their results (27 majors between them), so let's agree that forward is better. Both Ben and the Bear knew that the more forward you position the ball in your stance when hitting a driver, the easier it is to "activate" your legs on your downswing and get your weight over to your left side.

It also gives you more time to build clubhead speed. Even an inch can make a difference off the tee.

For the same reasons, a forward ball position can also do wonders for your wedge game. Yep, the lower-body activation that lets you bomb a driver can also help you pure a perfect wedge. To do it correctly, grab a wedge and address the ball as you would with your driver, with your feet wider than your shoulders and the ball an inch or two inside your left heel (below, middle). Next, move your

right foot toward your left about six inches, or until your right foot is under your right shoulder (below, right). This narrower base makes the ball look closer to the middle of your stance, but that's an illusion; it's still only an inch or two behind your left heel. And because your feet are closer together, your head is more "on top" of the ball, so you can power down and through for shot-stopping spin. One ball position for two important swings. The game just got easier—and a lot more fun.



**Scan this photo**  
to watch a video of  
this lesson. See p. 12.



Playing the ball off your left heel with a driver makes it easy to engage your lower body for extra speed and power.

To get the same leg power on your wedge shots, set up to the ball just as you do with your driver...

... then move your right foot toward your left. Your stance is narrower, but the ball is still forward.

ANGUS MURRAY (4)



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with  
**DR. T.J. TOMASI**  
Keiser University,  
Port St. Lucie, Fla.  
[Top 100 since 1999]



# Speak Softly, Swing a Big Stick

*There's a right way to talk to your swing. Here's how to be the best vocal coach you can be.*

**F**OLLOWING his one-stroke victory over Sam Snead in the 1939 Masters, Ralph Guldahl wrote a 221-page step-by-step breakdown of his swing called *Groove Your Golf*. But soon after *Groove* hit bookshelves, Guldahl went cold. Seemingly overnight, the swing that bagged the Masters, the 1937 and '38 U.S. Opens and 11 other PGA Tour events during the 1930s was gone. Guldahl was only 27 at the time, but as his wife, Laverne, reported years later, "When he sat down to write that book, he lost his game."

Guldahl ended up working as a club pro in Tarzana, Calif., where he taught until his death, in 1987. Did *Groove Your Golf* really dig Guldahl's grave? Science sides with Laverne. According to a recent performance study conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan and University of St. Andrews, describing what you're doing while you're executing the action—like talking your way through various backswing positions—impairs your ability to complete the task correctly. This so-called "verbal overshadowing" degrades performance, and it also stems the long-term retention of desired moves, leading to the proverbial "paralysis by analysis." The good news is that the memory disruption caused by verbal overshadowing is selective—it strikes when you describe concepts that are difficult to verbalize, such as feel, transition, sequence and balance. Let's take improving your driving posture:

Telling yourself to "set my feet outside my shoulders" is easier to grasp than saying "make the second part of my downswing faster than the first part." The latter piece of advice lacks the clarity of the former, so you send your brain fuzzy—and often erroneous—signals. Repeatedly making this mistake eventually "mutates" the good information in your long-term memory bank, turning moves that were once second nature into clunky spasms. The lesson: If you don't know how to say it, don't say it.

Tiger has described himself as "stuck between swings." I think he's stuck between four of them, actually, and the more he verbalizes the advanced concepts offered by his coaches instead of just "doing" them, the longer he'll fail to be a factor on Tour.

You don't always have to press mute (Phil Mickelson is a notorious swing vocalizer). Talking is a viable way to improve your swing if you go about it right, especially for beginners. So before stepping up to the mike and potentially ruining your game, heed the self-talk guidelines below.



"Swing, can you hear me now?" Sorry, Tiger, science says no. Too much self-talk can turn good motions into mush.

## HOW TO TALK A GOOD GAME

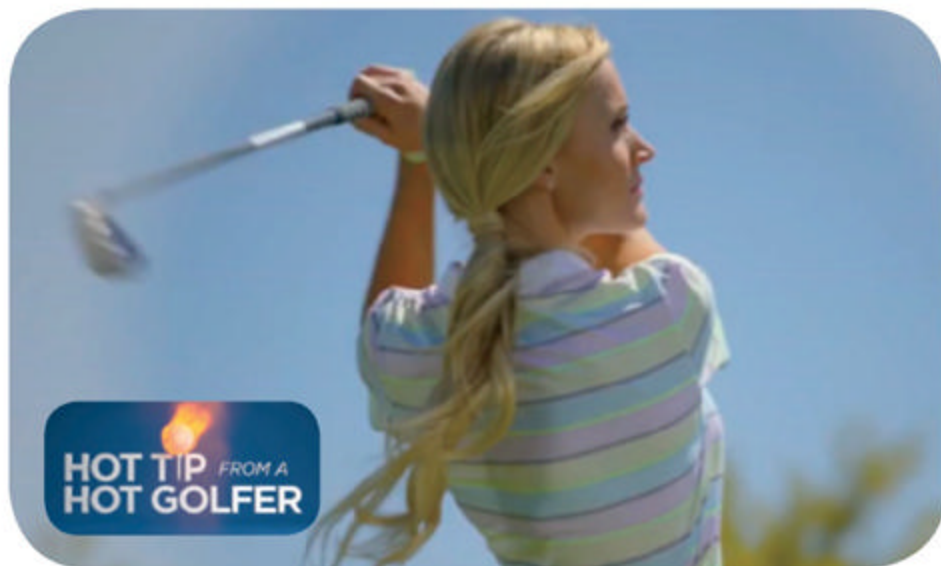
- 1. Leave the talking to a "verbal expert"—your friendly neighborhood PGA teaching pro.**
- 2. If you must talk when you practice, keep your commentary—and swing work—short. Spend more time hunting targets, not the "perfect" swing.**
- 3. Eliminate verbal cues from your pre- and post-shot routines. If you hit a bad shot, get mad, but don't get descriptive.**
- 4. Use imagery in lieu of words. Draw pictures in your mind, which involves different neural components than the ones that deal with verbal overshadowing. In other words, see it, don't say it.**
- 5. Fix your eyes on the target. A steady stare has been proven to increase focus and mute the inner voices that can sabotage your swing.**



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Including  
**HOT  
TIPS  
FROM  
A HOT  
GOLFER**

**This Month:** LPGA Tour star  
Blair O'Neal helps you practice  
smarter and play better

THE TEACHERS FROM THIS ISSUE ARE NOW ON **GOLFCOM/YOUR GAME**



**LOU GUZZI** (@LouGuzzi)  
He's fixed your ball position [p. 58]. Now put Lou to work on your bunker game! His "coin drill" is the fast track to a lot more sandies.

**ALSO FROM GUZZI**

- Master a draw in 60 seconds
- Fix every mistake by fixing your finish



**JOE HALLETT** (@joepgaguy)  
Combine Joe's tips on squaring the face [p. 49] with a drill to improve impact. Listen up—Joe's star student, Stacy Lewis, uses it.

**ALSO FROM HALLETT**

- How to putt the ball the perfect distance every time



**BRADY RIGGS** (@BradyRiggs)  
After trying Brady's putting setup [p. 52], check out his flop-shot technique. Now you have two ways to dominate from short range.

**ALSO FROM RIGGS**

- How to hit every iron 10 yards farther
- The straight-leg secret to powerful shots

🏌️ **YOUR GO-TO LESSON TEE**  
**GOLF.COM/YOURGAME**



# SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING.

Nobody's perfect. Even the best in the game mis-hit from time to time. That's why pros like Sergio Garcia use RSi with Face Slot technology, designed to maintain speed across the club face, giving him consistently longer shots, even when he hits the ball off-center.

See how RSi can improve your game at [MIS-HITSHAPPEN.COM](http://MIS-HITSHAPPEN.COM)



SERGIO GARCIA



## SEE THE PERFECT LINE



# The New Way to Read Greens

YOU READ ALMOST EVERY PUTT, but if you're like most players, your routine is guesswork disguised as green-reading. That won't get you close to the hole, let alone "in." You're not the only one reading, and weeping, on the greens. A new *Golf Magazine* study shows that America is massively misjudging the slope under its collective FootJoys, under-reading putts by a whopping 65 percent, on average. As a new season beckons, now's the time to raise your reading level—and save a fistful of strokes. PGA Tour star **Adam Scott** has cracked the code, becoming the world's best green-reader, so start by trying the 11-time Tour winner's groundbreaking method. Beyond Scott, we have six more easy-to-learn techniques from golf's keenest putting minds. You'll soon detect the subtlest bumps, bends and breaks, learning to read the trickiest greens as if they have subtitles.

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By **DAVID DeNUNZIO**  
Additional reporting by  
Michael Chwasky and Sean Zak

COURSE: GETTY IMAGES; GOLFER: WAX FRED KOKH; COMPOSITE: SI PIREMEDIA

## FIRST THINGS FIRST: YOU **SERIOUSLY** UNDER-READ YOUR PUTTS

# 65%

THAT'S HOW MUCH YOU UNDER-READ the break on a typical putt, according to a *Golf Magazine*-sponsored study conducted at the Pinehurst Golf Academy. All of these flawed reads add up to lots of lost strokes, even with perfect putting technique. In our study, we assessed the green-reading skill of 72 golfers just like you. Initially, our research team simply sought to determine the ideal *position* from which to accurately detect slope (behind the hole, behind the ball, etc.), but results showed view position to be meaningless to good green-reading. Our study subjects misread *everything*, no matter where they stood or crouched. Some 25 years ago, Dave Pelz told everyday players to triple the amount of break they saw, and that's as true now as it was then. Over the next several pages, you'll learn how to see the correct line every single time.

If the correct read is 18 inches out on a 15-foot putt...

...and you misread it by 65 percent...

...you'll miss the hole on the low side by as much as seven inches.

**The Study**  
**The brains behind it:** Top 100 Teacher Eric Alpenfels and Kelly Mitchum of the Pinehurst Golf Academy, and Bob Christina, Ph.D., dean emeritus of the School of Health and Human Sciences at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro.  
**Who took part:** Seventy-two golfers (50 male, 22 female) with handicaps ranging from +3 to 36.  
**What they did:** Assess the break on 18 different putts on a sloping green from nine random viewing points. Nine of the putts broke from left to right, and nine broke from right to left, anywhere from 16 to 57 inches. The amount of ideal break for each putt was determined prior to the study based on a ball speed in which the putt finishes 17 inches past the hole in the event it misses.

**The Results**  
**1. You're an "under" achiever.** Of the 1,296 putts our subjects hit, almost every one (1,244) was under-read (perceived to break less than the actual break) by 65 percent, on average. That means a putt breaking 18 inches was judged to bend only 11 or 12 inches. You're not just missing putts—you're missing by a mile.

**2. You're democratic in your misreads.** Ninety-six percent of the 648 right-to-left putts were under-read by an average of 63 percent. The 648 left-to-righters were under-read by 67 percent.

**3. Having a low handicap doesn't mean squat.** The test subjects with low handicaps (+3 to 15) proved to be only 8 percent more accurate in their reads than the test subjects with high handicaps (16 to 36), under-reading 96 percent of their putts by an average of 61 percent. Sure, they may have smoother strokes, but better players misread greens just about as badly as higher-handicaps. Unless your last name is Snedeker or Crenshaw, you probably have little clue how much putts actually break.

**What You Can Do About It**  
Traditional answer: Spend countless hours on the green reading and rolling putt after putt after putt. *Borrrring.* And ineffective. Our advice? **Admit that your green-reading needs work, and find a method that works for you.** Start with the eye assessment on the next page, to see if you're predisposed to making bad reads. Then, heed the advice from our other experts. They offer proven, pragmatic approaches to finding the perfect line every time.



AUGUSTA NATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES

### Jack Nicklaus, 1961

The Masters rookie turns heads—literally—to trace the perfect line with his eyes. The Bear would become one of the great pressure putters.

# 1. GIVE YOURSELF AN EYE EXAM

DO YOUR PEEPERS deceive you? You can't read putts unless you can judge distance.

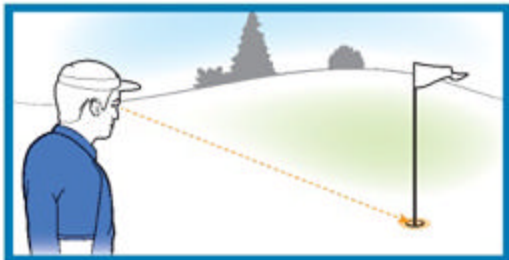
Craig Farnsworth, O.D. See and Score Golf Schools, The Palms G.C., La Quinta, Calif. [puttdoctor.com](http://puttdoctor.com) | @CraigFarnsworth

**W**hen talking green-reading, we tend to focus more on breaks rather than on distance, because golfers think distance is easier to discern than tilt. As an optometrist and sports-vision specialist, I know that's not the case. Many players I work with are "depth-deficient," perceiving the location of the hole as closer than it is. In some cases, their perceptual

error is 25 percent—that means that a 25-footer looks like it only needs to travel 20 feet. Those five feet of misjudgment cost you.

One of the first things I do with a new client is to make sure they don't suffer this malady, which is as common as freckles—and just as threatening if left untreated. Give yourself an "eye exam," using this depth-perception test.

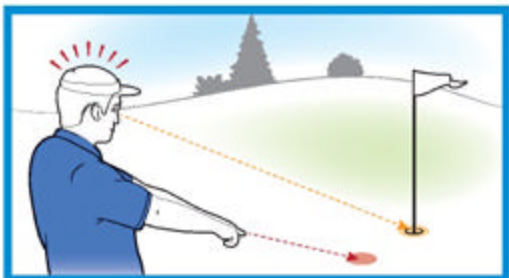
## DEPTH-PERCEPTION TEST



**Step 1** Pick a target on the ground at least 20 feet away from you, such as the bottom of the flagstick. Burn the target in your mind's eye.



**Step 2** Close your eyes, raise your arms (keeping all else very still) and point your two index fingers where you *think* the target is.



**Step 3** Open your eyes and note where your fingers are pointing in relation to the target.

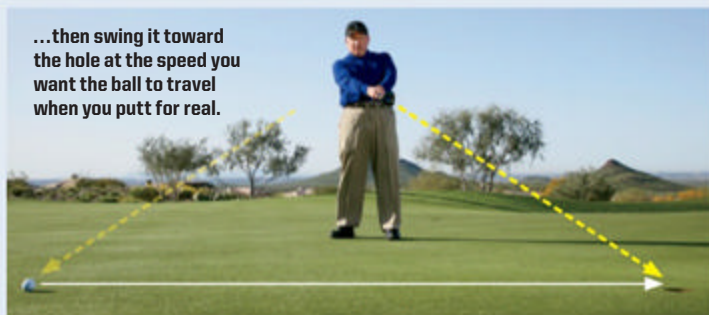
## ASSESSING YOUR RESULTS

If you're like the majority who take this depth-perception test, you ended up pointing to a spot on the ground (or green) well short of the real target, which floods your motor systems with an improper distance to react to. You putt to an illusion instead of the hole. Don't panic—this is a minor ocular flaw. Yet the effects can wreak havoc on your reads and your score. I've developed some quick, easy ways to offset the tricks your beautiful blues can, and will, play on you.

To "feel" the correct distance, point your putter at the ball...



...then swing it toward the hole at the speed you want the ball to travel when you putt for real.



ANGUS MURRAY

**1. Judge distance from the side of the putt, not from behind the ball.** This gives you much better appreciation of the overall putt length. Remember how far the putt looks from this perspective, *then* go back to the ball to complete your read.

**2. "Walk" off the distance with your stroke.** From the side of the putt, point your putter at the ball, then pass it over an imaginary line running from the ball to the cup at

the same speed you want the putt to roll (photos, above). Moving your putterhead from the ball to the hole at the proper speed when you're calculating distance helps your brain move your arms and putter with the correct amount of energy when you putt the ball for real. Yes, you can do this by simply scanning your eyes over the line, but studies prove that using your eyes and hands in tandem enhances brain performance much more than using only your eyes.

## 2. ASSESS THE GREEN FROM THE LOW SIDE

LOOKING "UP" AT putts makes reading break as easy as reading a magazine

**Todd Sones** *Todd Sones Impact Golf Schools, White Deer Run G.C., Vernon Hills, Ill.*  
toddsones.com | @ToddSones

**T**he debate over whether to read putts from behind the hole or behind the ball is a hotly contested one. For me, the correct answer's a no-brainer: *It depends*. Different putts demand different perspectives in order for your eyes to accurately assess both distance and slope. Here's a simple guide:

**If your putt is downhill, read it from behind the hole.**  
**If your putt is uphill, read it from behind the ball.**



Setting your sight lines perpendicular to the object you're looking at provides a distortion-free view.



Reading downhill putts from behind the ball and uphill putts from behind the hole gives you the same distorted picture as when you try to read a book or magazine that tilts away from you.

Note that in both cases you're reading the green from the low side of the putt. Favoring the low side positions your sight lines perpendicular (or closer to perpendicular) to the slope when you crouch, so you look *into* the hill, not down it.

Does it make a difference? Grab a book or magazine and try reading it while tilting it away from your eyes. It's impossible. The words are blurry, and images on the page narrow toward a vanishing point, like railroad tracks on a long straightaway (bottom photo, left). You get the same perspective disruption when you read putts from the high side; like a tilted book, the green ends up running away from you, making the distance between the ball and the hole look longer than it is.

Read putts like you read a magazine—with the green right in front of your face. Much modern green-reading instruction is based on science. This one is pure common sense.

## 3. SEE IT LIKE ADAM SCOTT

SINCE TAKING UP my AimPoint Express technique, the hard-hitting Australian has become the top green-reader on Tour

**Mark Sweeney** *AimPoint Technologies, Orlando, Fla.* [aimpointgolf.com](http://aimpointgolf.com) | @AimPointGolf

**A**imPoint's predictive putt technology can calculate any break on any green. It's powerful stuff, but some users find it difficult to digest. So we developed a quicker—and easier—way to use it, called **AimPoint Express**. No sooner did we invent this technique than we caught Adam Scott express-reading his putts at the 2014 Honda Classic. (Turns out his coach, Brad Malone, had taken an AimPoint class, and promptly passed the technique along to Scott.) Adam captured the Crowne Plaza Invitational a few months later, then reeled off 11 straight top 16 finishes, including seven top 10s.

I met with Adam before the 2014 Masters to help refine his technique, which involves reading putts with your feet, not your eyes, and holding up your fingers to pinpoint the correct aim line (photo, right). Obviously, he's a quick learner. In 2013, Adam ranked 103rd in Strokes Gained Putting. Last year he was 55th. Expect him to keep trending upward in 2015.

The best way to learn AimPoint Express is to take a class, but here's a quick lesson.





AUGUSTA NATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES

### Ben Crenshaw, 1980s

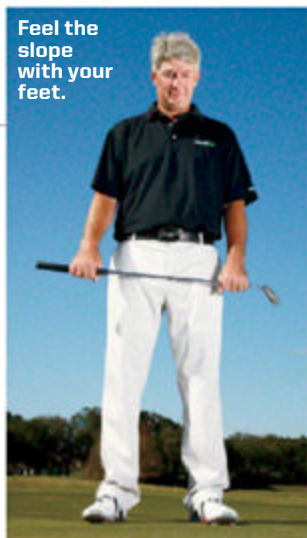
The finest putter of his era plumb-bobs his way to perfect reads—and eventually two Masters wins—despite criticism of the technique.



Scan this photo  
to see the Express Read  
in action. See p. 12.

## HOW TO SPEED-READ ANY GREEN

Feel the  
slope  
with your  
feet.



ANGUS MURRAY

Rate the  
slope  
from 1  
to 5.



Align the  
same  
number  
of fingers  
against  
the side  
of the  
cup.



**Step 1** On a given putt, walk to a point halfway between your ball and the hole. As you face the hole, shift your focus to your feet, getting a feel for the ground. Pay particular attention to how much slope you're able to sense.

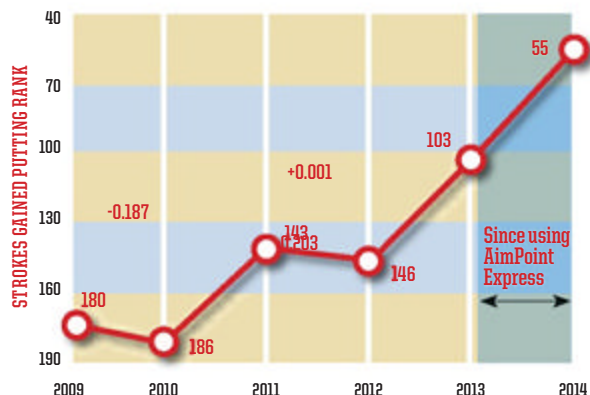
**Step 2** Rate the slope you're standing on using a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being flat and 5 being severe. If, for example, you feel a lot more pressure under your left foot than your right, then the ground slopes right to left.

**Step 3** Hold up the same number of fingers as you picked on the scale, and align them against the high side of the cup (the left side if you felt pressure under your right foot). Aim your putter at the outside edge of your fingers. That's your read!

## Why It Works

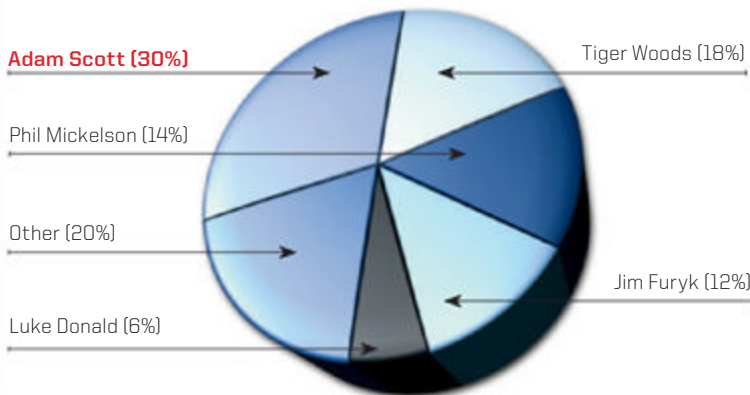
Using your feet to determine slope is foolproof. As you've read on these pages, your eyes play tricks on you. The better you are at sensing slope using the pressure underneath your shoes, instead of relying on what you think you see, the better you'll become at "feeling" break. That's when your green-reading will go to a whole new level. By all means, experiment with express reads, but to get the most from them, consult a certified professional ([aimpointgolf.com](http://aimpointgolf.com)).

## Express Yourself: Adam Scott's Move up the Green-Read Ladder



## Top 100 Teacher Poll

Q: Who's the best green-reader on the PGA Tour?



"This system is so easy," Scott says. "I could read putts blindfolded. Anyone can. I taught my wife, and she now reads greens as well as I do."

## 4. BLOCK OUT “NOISE” POLLUTION

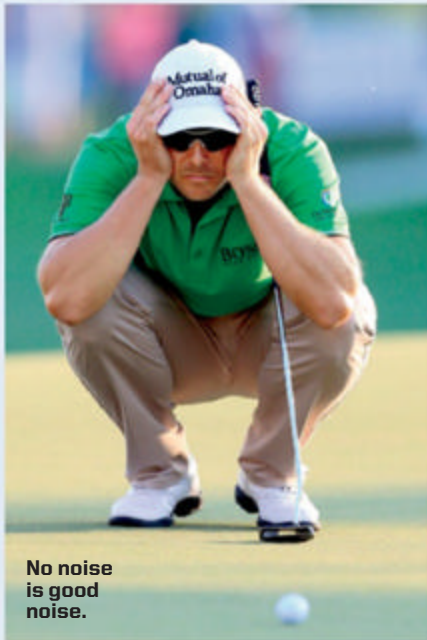
THE ONLY SLOPE that matters is the one between you and the hole

Marius Filmlalter *Marius Golf, Dallas, Texas mariusgolf.com | @marius\_golf*

**G**ood green-readers “work off horizontal.” This term means that they look for a flat line in the background, then compare how much the green around them tilts in comparison. Even on severely undulating greens, horizontal lines are easy to spot. Look for:

- The eaves and windows on the clubhouse or halfway house
- Benches
- Bodies of water

If you aren’t able to locate a horizontal standard, use the brim of your cap or visor. Better yet, curl your hands around your face, with your fingers above your eyebrows and your palms blocking out your peripheral vision. This creates a pure horizontal directly above your eyes, and it also eliminates a lot of the visual “background noise” that can interfere and confuse your reads.



No noise is good noise.

Cup your hands around your face and cap, like **Henrik Stenson** and dozens of Tour players do. This eliminates background noise and establishes a “horizontal” against which you can judge the slope.

No, Henrik Stenson isn’t playing peekaboo. Many Tour players use their hands and cap to see a putt’s true slope; it helps give them a clear, clutter-free view of the line. For best results, **drop the brim of your cap or your fingers to the back edge of the cup, to block your view of the green beyond the hole.** Ignore anything past the cup. Often, the green’s apron or the lips of nearby bunkers will tilt in a different direction than the ground you stand on. Don’t let this “noise” distract you from your read.

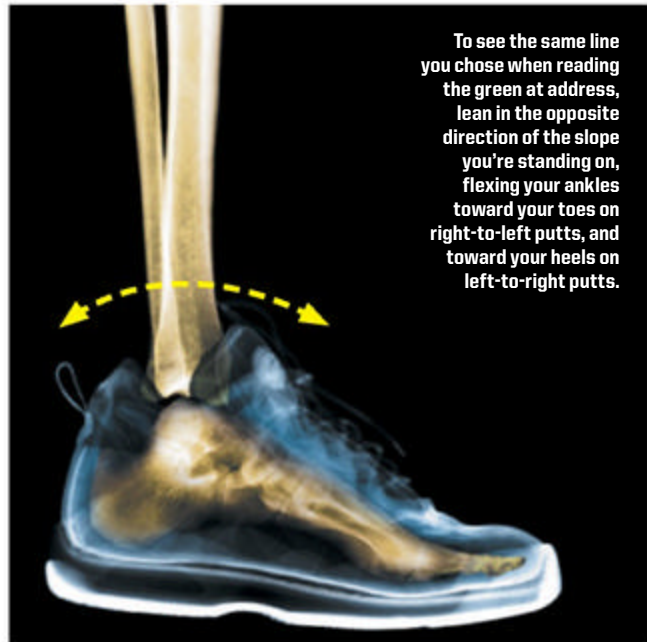
## 5. WEIGHT WATCH

LEAN AWAY FROM the break as you stand at address to maintain your view of the perfect line

David Edel *Edel Golf, Austin, Texas edelgolf.com | @EDELgolf*

**O**ur bodies are wired to see things as level. Your subconscious likes *flat*. Unfortunately, this internal gyroscope is causing you to mis-aim your putter at address, spoiling your good reads (when you make them). For example, on a left-to-righter, the natural tendency is to lean with the slope as you settle into your address position, toward your toes, until your eyes are level with the tilt of the green. You do it without even thinking. But that makes your eyes shift

outside the ball, causing you to aim left of your chosen line. The opposite happens on right-to-left putts; you lean toward your heels, shifting your eyes inside the ball, and you aim too far to the right. Hey, it’s just our natural design, but it’s a huge putting problem, compounded by the fact that your shoes feature heel wedges that slope as much as two degrees—an added tilt that further distorts your feel for break at address.



To see the same line you chose when reading the green at address, lean in the opposite direction of the slope you’re standing on, flexing your ankles toward your toes on right-to-left putts, and toward your heels on left-to-right putts.

The fix? **On a breaking putt, lean in the opposite direction of the slope you’re standing on, or into the hill.** This helps fight the visual distortion that your subconscious leveling system causes. Make it subtle—a little flex in your ankles in either direction will do. Shift your weight into your heels on left-to-right putts, and into your toes on right-to-lefters. Most of my students can aim straight at the hole from 10 feet away on a flat putt, yet mis-aim by two feet from the same distance if the putt has break. It’s because they fail to adjust for the posture change facilitated by our body’s need to make the world around us appear flat.

GREAT MOMENTS  
IN GREEN-READING



CHRIS COON/PGA TOUR

**Loren Roberts, 1990s**

The “Boss of the Moss” popularizes using the eyes and feet to judge the correct slope.



**SKECHERS  
PERFORMANCE**

**Looking to increase  
your distance?**

TIP #12

Hit the ball farther.



Skechers GO GOLF Pro™

Introducing Skechers GO GOLF®. The official shoe of Matt Kuchar.  
Ultra Lightweight • Increased Stability • Maximum Comfort

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[skechersperformance.com/GOGOLF](http://skechersperformance.com/GOGOLF)

## 6. READ PUTTS LIKE A CLOCK

TO SIMPLIFY YOUR reads, visualize where the ball will enter the cup, then let your body and stroke react to what you see

Mike Shannon Sea Island Golf Performance Center, Sea Island, Ga. [seaislandgpc.com](http://seaislandgpc.com)

**G**reat green-readers—Loren Roberts comes to mind—have a knack for “feeling” how a putt will break the moment they read it. It’s more instinct than hard geometry. For more Jedi-like reads, try this.

When you reach the green, picture a clock on top of the hole, with six o’clock pointing at your ball. As you assess your line, imagine where on the clock your putt will roll over and fall into the cup. Then, **simply react to the position on the dial**. For example, if you see your ball falling into the cup at eight o’clock, focus on that edge of the hole as you settle into your address position, then smoothly let that line guide your stroke. If your mind’s eye sees the putt entering the cup at four o’clock, then focus only on four o’clock.

Reading and putting this way is similar to how a quarterback completes a pass to a receiver crossing over the middle; he focuses on the receiver, then taps into his instincts to hurl that pigskin far enough ahead of the receiver so he can catch it in full stride.

Find your entry point, then let instincts take over. After all, your goal is draining putts, not perfect reads.

**If you picture your putt entering the cup at 7:00 on an imaginary clock, shift your focus to 7:00.**



**GREAT MOMENTS  
IN GREEN-READING**



**Camilo Villegas, 2008**

**How low can he go? In September, the flexible Spider-Man grabs two Tour wins. Chiropractors rejoice.**

ANGUS MURRAY



ANGUS MURRAY

### DAVE PELZ WANTS YOU!

**Here's your chance to take part in a special study to cure our nation's green-reading woes once and for all.**

I've written countless articles extolling the benefits of improved green-reading. The fact that most players still *under-play* break has inspired me to further investigate the mysteries of solving break, specifically how to train golfers to visualize putts and putt lines correctly.

**I'm up to the challenge, but to do it right, I'll need your help.**

Here's your chance to make golf-research history. Visit [pelzgolf.com/greenreading](http://pelzgolf.com/greenreading) to either volunteer as a test subject in my new green-reading project or simply lend your support. I'm all in! Are you? Finding the ultimate way to determine break is my primary purpose and goal: It's time to get to the bottom of green-reading. Together, we can crack the green-reading code for good.

ANGUS MURRAY



# TOO LONG FOR TOUR.

With our latest Speed Pocket and expanded sweet spot, AEROBURNER Irons have too much distance for the pros, which means it's just right for you.

**Their loss is your gain.**

AERO  
**BURNER**  
Irons



## 7. CONDUCT A SIDE-TO-SIDE SURVEY

A HORIZONTAL READ is more effective than a vertical one

James Sieckmann *Shadow Ridge C.C., Omaha, Neb.*  
jsegolfacademy.com | @jamesiesieckmann

**Y**our tendency is to scan the putt from the ball to the hole and back again, or vertically. That's a good way to determine if the putt is moving uphill or downhill, but it doesn't help you see how much side-to-side tilt you face. You'll glean more information by scanning the putt horizontally. Making a side-to-side assessment in your green-reading routine will have you judging break like a cagey pro. Here's how:

**Step 1** From behind the hole, examine the final three feet of the putt.

**Step 2** In you mind's eye, picture two coins on the green, one on each side of an imaginary line running from the ball to the cup. Make the coins about four feet apart.

**Step 3** If you haven't already, squat down, then run your eyes horizontally between the coins. In the event the green tilts, you'll immediately notice that one coin is lower than the other, giving you a clear idea of the direction and severity of the slope.

**Step 4** Walk behind the ball, and repeat your horizontal scan from coin to coin for the first half of the putt. You now have a complete picture of slope. For best results, drop actual coins on the green when you practice. After a while, your reads will be absolute money.



### TRAINING AIDS

#### TAKE THESE TOOLS AND PUTT IT!

Need more reading help? Let an app or training aid give sight to your blind eye.



Place the **Sure Putt** (\$39.95) on any putting surface and read it like a level. Inscriptions around the Sure Putt's viewfinder tell you both horizontal and vertical slope direction. It looks like something you'd pull out of your toolbox, and is just as handy. [sureputtgolf.com](http://sureputtgolf.com)

**The Breakmaster** (\$119.95) instantly tells you in exact degrees how much the green breaks at any point. The nifty digital display also indicates the direction of the slope it rests on. Each Breakmaster comes with a Greens Book explaining how to chart greens like a Tour caddie. [breakmaster.com](http://breakmaster.com)



**The BreakMeter app** (free) uses the built-in gyroscope on Apple devices to simultaneously calculate horizontal and vertical slope. Just launch the app, set your device on the green and let BreakMeter do its thing. The app won't tell you how much break to play, but its animated graphics and instantaneous slope projections can help train your eye to recognize even subtle tilts. [breakmeter.com](http://breakmeter.com)

### GREAT MOMENTS IN GREEN-READING



Brian Gay, 2014

Adam Scott will get all the ink, but trendsetter Gay is the first pro to use AimPoint Express on Tour, in January.

STAN BAZ/PGA TOUR

ANGUS MURRAY

SUREPUTT: BREAKMASTER; SCHICTER LEE



**LEUPOLD**  
AMERICA'S OPTICS AUTHORITY

# THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.



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Patented Smart Key faceplate gives you full access to the GX-4i2's advanced features, including True Golf Range™ (TGR®) and Club Selector™.

## TOURNAMENT LEGAL

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The Callaway logo, featuring the brand name in a white script font above a white chevron symbol, is positioned in the upper right corner of the advertisement.

Callaway

A large, detailed image of a Callaway XR Driver golf club head, showing its aerodynamic shape and the 'XR' logo. The club is set against a background of red, white, and blue diagonal stripes.

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A red and white performance badge with a diagonal design, containing the text 'UP TO 5 MPH' and 'FASTER BALL SPEED\*'.

UP TO  
**5 MPH**  
FASTER  
BALL SPEED\*

The 'XR' logo, with a stylized 'X' and 'R' in white and blue.

**BUILT FOR  
OUTRAGEOUS SPEED.**

FRED  
FUNK

# Late Bloomer

*Ten years ago, laser-straight Fred Funk shocked the golf world when he won the Players Championship. How did a 48-year-old, injury-plagued bunter beat the Tour's baddest bombers? Location, location, location.*

Interview by Cameron Morfit

Portrait by Ben Van Hook

**F**RED FUNK CANNOT HIT A DRIVER 280 yards in the air unless the wind is at his back. He's listed in the PGA Tour media guide as 5 feet, 8 inches tall, but admits with a shrug and a grin that he was always five seven and a half. (At 58, he's shrunk to an even five seven).

Physically unimposing though he may be, Funk is still, in Tour terms, a freak of nature.

He worked an anonymous day job into his 30s and peaked as a player in his late 40s, an age when most pros go dormant. And he's the most accurate force this side of an atomic clock, routinely pelting nearly 80 percent of the fairways on any tour he plays, regular or senior. Indeed, Funk's ballstriking is pinpoint to an extent that today's big guns could only dream of. In 2005, when he won the Players Championship, at age 48, on the watery Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass, Funk went at every pin—in 30 mph winds and for all 32 holes of the final day. The winner of 17 total PGA and Champions Tour events discusses his freaky-good "ball-control game," what it would take to steal one more from the young guys, and why the 16th time you get your knee drained of fluid is always the worst.



*The*  
**GOLF**  
MAGAZINE  
INTERVIEW



**You made an ace at the Pacific Links Hawaii Championship last September. Is it true you once carded a hole-in-one but weren't happy with the shot?**

It was the Canadian Open at Hamilton [Golf & Country Club, outside Toronto], on the last day, and I hit a terrible 3-iron really low. It went into the hole going about Mach 2. I hit it and tossed the club down—like, “Oh, geez!”—and it went right in. Tiger saw it on TV and gave me grief. He said, “Fred, you can't make a hole-in-one and throw your club.”

**According to your longtime caddie Mark Long, who also played for you in the '80s when you coached the University of Maryland golf team, that's not the only time you were unhappy with an ace. It also happened on the 13th hole at TPC Sawgrass.**

I forgot about that one. We were out there just playing for fun, a friendly match, and I hit a terrible 6-iron, and I didn't even look. It was almost dark. Mark said, “It went in.”

**Your accuracy seems to be resistant to age. You turn 59 in June. Have you ever flirted with that magic number on the scorecard?**

Yeah, a couple of times on Tour, and at Pablo Creek, my home course in Ponte Vedra Beach, I've got the course record at 60. I had about a 20-footer at the last for 59, and I left it on the high side. It was just a fun round. I shot a 59 at the Desert Course in Scottsdale, but I don't count it because we were playing it at 6,000 yards, and the round took about six hours. It was a pro-am, and I made everything—with a putter that I hated. I took it out of the bag for the Phoenix Open and ended up missing the cut.

**You shot 59 and replaced your putter?**

It felt like I was hitting a rock. My caddie said I was an idiot, and I couldn't argue.

**What's harder, making a five-footer to win the Players or a five-footer to win the Employees Open?**

Apparently a five-footer for the Employees Open, because I never won it. All the guys that worked at the University of Maryland Golf Course, we had a tournament, and I never won it in the eight or nine years I played in it. I worked there from age 12 and coached there until I was 31. I did it all—worked the range, worked carts—before eventually coaching there and becoming an assistant pro. I didn't like teaching, but I taught a bit.

**You must have done a good job teaching your son Taylor, since he won the Florida high school championship and is now a golfer at the University of Texas. He also made a nice showing last summer at the U.S. Amateur.**

No, it wasn't my teaching. We got him lessons from Travis Fulton, head instructor at the TPC Academy. Plus, we home-schooled the kids, so Taylor was always with us, always around the best of the best, and he just morphed into being a golfer. He's been outdriving me for the last year and a half. If I don't play well, he's got me, but if I'm playing well I can still beat him. We bet five bucks or so, but it's my money, so it's like I'm betting myself.

**You played on two Presidents Cup teams and one Ryder Cup team. Describe the first Presidents Cup phone call you got from Captain Jack Nicklaus, in 2003, when you were at TGI Friday's in Akron.**

I answered the phone and he said, “Fred, you didn't quite do what I needed you to do.” He wanted me to make the team on points, but I just missed. I said, “I know, Jack, I'm sorry.” He said, “That's okay, I picked you.” And I just screamed: “Atta boy, Jack!” That was one of my all-time



favorite phone calls. People around me stopped eating. I didn't care. I never dreamed of representing my country, let alone at that age [47]. It was exciting.

**How many presidents have you met?**

I've met both Bushes, and Clinton. I got invited to Dubya's birthday party two times when he was in office. Another visit was for the Presidents Cup when it was at [the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club]. They were very normal, ordinary guys who



OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: STAN BADZ/PGA TOUR; LEFT: TRACY BOLLIAN/US PRESSWIRE; RIGHT: REED SAKOWAP



**Above, hats off to Funk's 2005 Players win. Left, with Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush at the 2005 Presidents Cup.**

just happened to hold the highest office in the world. I never thought I'd care to meet Clinton, but he was so engaging, and he's really a fun guy to be around.

**You toiled in obscurity as the Maryland coach from '81 to '88, then joined the Tour at the relatively late age of 32. How did you finally get over the hump and raise your game to Tour level?**

I was very driven. I practiced extremely hard. I never thought I was that good, but I kept qualifying as a club pro for some U.S. Opens and PGAs, and I'd make cuts and realize I was better than I thought. So I kept at it. I always thought Tour pros were so good that they were like robots, but I saw they have bad days—they're human. Realizing that drove me even more to get out there. After a while I didn't believe they were better than me.

**You've had plenty of injuries in your career—one of your endorsements is for Stryker Orthopaedics, for**

**“People don't take me seriously, but I've got a fierce competitive side. I hate to lose, but not everyone sees that.”**

**joint replacement. When did you start to get dinged up?**

In '86 I injured my shoulder, and that set me back for a year or two. I was playing in a pro-am in Maryland and hit it in the trees, and as I was swinging down the club got caught in a branch, and I partially tore my rotator cuff. It really screwed up my left shoulder. I reinjured it in '91 with a boogie board at the beach and had to have it operated on.

**And then you had a series of issues with your knee, right?**

**Funk put on a pink skirt after Annika outdrove him at the 2005 Skins Game.**

I had it operated on about eight times in a four-year period. I had a staph infection in it in '08. I had it drained 18 times that year, and the 16th time got me. I was playing Russian roulette with those needles. I had had my knee scoped in the beginning of '08, and it kept blowing up on me as I was playing, so I'd have to get it drained again.

**And you kept playing on your knee after all those procedures?**

I had caught Jay Haas for the [Charles] Schwab Cup by the end of '08, and I had it drained for the 16th time at the Shark Shootout. I got the staph infection that night. I couldn't even move. I had played the Saturday round and it kept getting worse and worse as the day went on. I hit a 7-iron into 18 and walked over to the lake, as far away as I could get from everybody, and started crying—it hurt that bad. That was the beginning of the nightmare. I was home and in the operating room by Sunday morning. I was on an IV PICC line for about six weeks and on antibiotics. The doctor told me, “We'll take your leg off before it kills you.” And I went, “Okay, you got my attention.”

**How is your health now?**

I've got tendinitis so bad I can't even grip a club. It showed up out of nowhere the Tuesday before the Allianz at Boca Raton [in February]. I had a cortisone shot and played and finished third. It was still bothering me at the Pebble Beach pro-am, which I really wanted to play in. I was exempt there from the money I made at Mayakoba at the end of last year, but I withdrew before my tee time because I couldn't grip the club.

**What's the prognosis?**

It's basically tennis elbow on the left arm. I had the PRP [platelet-rich plasma] therapy, and I'm waiting for it to kick in. It's very disappointing that this injury has shut me down.

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FRED FUNK

### Are you a good bad-weather player?

The weather worked to my advantage big-time because they had really high rough that year, and the bombers were losing control of the ball and hitting it in there. I was hitting a low-trajectory shot. I hit a low shot into the green on six, and I said, "I think I've got it today," as far as controlling my flight. I flew it at every single pin, even on 18. With my second shot on the par-5 16th, I even aimed at the *water*. I had a hybrid 3-iron, ball above my feet, wind whipping right to left, and I hit it really solid and waited for the wind to kick in, and it did. My ball hit the green and I two-putted for birdie. Then I three-putted 14, 15 and 17. If I'd two-putted those, I might have been the first player to hit all wedges down 18. [Laughs]

### Take us through the last hole.

I hit a good drive, one of my best ever, and then hit a 6-iron into that left bunker, pin high. I pulled it a hair and hit it a little on the toe. It was close to being a good shot, but it was also almost a disaster shot. I actually forgot that bunker was there. I thought I'd hit it in the water. My caddie, Mark, said, "That's actually in the trap." →

are written one way and evolve into something different. We're wingin' it, but we've got to hit the theme. The chainsaw one was by far my best.

### The skirt, the funny ads—does being recognized as an entertainer of sorts leave you short-changed for your on-course achievements?

I think so. I don't think people take me seriously. I still feel like I've got a fierce competitive side. I hate to lose. I don't think people see that.

**In 2005, short-hitting Fred Funk wins the Fifth Major, at 48. In 1986, long-hitting Jack Nicklaus wins the Masters, at 46.**

**Jack's victory gets a lot more ink than yours.**

**Is your Players Championship win underrated?**

Probably, but I'm used to it. Nicklaus at 46 was ridiculous. I remember his Masters round even more than I remember winning the Players.

### Come on. Really?

Well, don't forget that we had to play 32 holes on that Monday, so a lot of that final round was a blur to me, because it was basically two rounds of golf—and we played in 30-mile-per-hour winds.

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**You mentioned last fall's OHL Classic at Mayakoba, where you were in the hunt on Sunday but made a triple at the 12th hole to tie for ninth. Can you still win on the PGA Tour even at your age, and with your length—or lack thereof?**

And I made that triple from the middle of the fairway! Yeah, on the right course I can win—I've got to have a really good putting week, but, yes, I think I can. I just won't have many opportunities.

**You've earned more than \$30 million on the course, not counting endorsements. What do you spend your money on?**

I've got a nice house, and a house for my mom and a house for my brother, and I've got a little condo in Austin [where son Taylor attends school]. Uncle Sam takes a chunk, and some bad investments hurt, so, you know, I try not to make any more boo-boos.

**What were the bad investments?**

I invested in some real estate things that didn't come through, but one of them was a big chunk. That hurt. I used to have a third share of a Learjet 31—that was extravagant. That was when we flew privately for seven years. That was a great way to go, but that was a lot of

money. I can't afford that anymore, so I fly commercial.

**What does a "boo-boo" mean? Seven figures?**

It just hurt. Fortunately, I've made enough that I can rebound from it.

**Speaking of money, everyone remembers the pink skirt you put on after being outdriven by Annika Sorenstam at the 2005 Skins Game. But not everyone remembers that you took home \$925,000 that week—more than Woods, Annika or Fred Couples.**

Tiger probably does—he won the third hole to get the first three Skins, and I got the last 15. He wasn't happy about it. He missed a putt on the last hole that would have taken it into overtime, and I birdied a par 5 that he and Freddie could reach in two and Annika and I couldn't.

**You're a natural in Mitsubishi's "Don't Get Out of Your Comfort Zone" commercials. Fred Couples and Corey Pavin are good, too. What is it about you older guys on TV?**

The experience is very creative—most of the commercials

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**You then got up and down to essentially seal the win, and then spiked your visor on the green.**

It was just pure emotion.

**You played with Adam Scott in the final round. He was the defending champion, with a power game that's nothing like your style. Has Tour golf become unfair to shorter hitters? If Gary Player came along today, could he even compete?**

I think it's really difficult for anyone who doesn't hit it a long way to compete. You have to have a certain baseline distance. You've got to fly it 280 in the air. That's about average out there.

**You won eight times on the Tour and nine times on the Champions Tour. Are you satisfied with your career?**

Am I satisfied? No. I wish I'd had more confidence and knowledge. It's a maturation thing. You've got to get used to being in your own skin, and playing against guys you see on TV. Very few people are world-beaters right out of the gate. I had to learn to believe in

myself. I probably still struggle with that. Sometimes I don't believe I'm as good as I can be. And I still believe I can get better, even at my age.

**You're pushing 60 but still feel that you're improving at golf? That's inspiring, and encouraging.**

I'm learning a lot about myself, how to compete. When my body feels good, I can play as good as ever, if not better. I still work hard at age 58, although not as hard. My body can't take it like it used to.

**"I hit a low 3-iron that went in. Later Tiger said, 'You can't make a hole-in-one and then throw your club.'"**

**How would you describe your playing style?**

I play ball control. I have to hit it straight. You can be long and crooked. Take Tiger and Phil, who were No. 1 and No. 2 in the world for forever. They couldn't find the course with their driver, but they're such great iron players and have such great short games—and such great imaginations—that they were always able to make up for it. Me, I just hit it in play, keep the ball in front of me and try to take advantage of my opportunities. You can still play that way out here. Justin Leonard, Corey Pavin—guys still do it that way and have success. Pavin was artistic. He played the game like he was painting a picture. The modern Corey Pavin is Bubba Watson, who's Pavin with power, moving the ball all over the place.

**You played with Bubba in his first round as a rookie, at the 2003 Sony Open. What was your impression?**

Bubba put on a show that first day. He hit a shot on the seventh, a par 3—it was a low 8-iron that hooked about 30 yards, 20 feet high, to about two feet from the hole. It was amazing. Then he hit a drive on the par-5 18th that went stupid far—he sliced it over the trees and was past the crosswalk. I hit mine straight, probably 270-280, but his ball must have been 300 yards *ahead* of me. He had, like, 80 yards left.

**What's the biggest misconception about life as a Tour pro?**

That it's all glamour. What you don't see on TV each week are the guys who slam their trunks on Friday afternoon, wondering if they're good enough to make it, spending more than they're making. I feel really fortunate that I've had the career I've had, with as late of a start as I had. I've been on Tour every year since 1989. I still pinch myself to be out here. It's been a great ride. ■



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# Carla Harris

*Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Morgan Stanley*

**IN ADDITION TO HER LEADERSHIP DUTIES AT MORGAN STANLEY,** the firm she joined straight out of Harvard Business School 27 years ago, **Carla Harris** chairs the National Women's Business Council, a position she was appointed to by President Obama. Harris is also the author of two books, *Expect to Win* and the new *Strategize to Win*, as well as an accomplished gospel singer. Between these endeavors, speaking engagements and her work as a board member for several community organizations, Harris still finds time to work on her golf game whenever she can.

—interview with Evan Rothman

**How did you get interested in golf?** I was at a corporate retreat in 1992 and was put in a foursome with my boss. I told him, "I can't wait to do this—I've never played before." He said, "What? Maybe you better go over there with the pro." I've always been athletic, so I stomped off to the pro, thinking, Why do I need a pro? Golf can't be that hard. Ten swings and misses later I was hooked, because I love challenges. That the game requires mental discipline as well as physical acumen, and you get to play in beautiful places, also sucked me in.

**How is your game these days?** Not as good as I'd like it to be. But I am committed to getting my handicap into the teens this year. That means going to the range diligently, starting this weekend. So much of the game is in the practice. If you're only playing rounds in the late spring and summer, you're only going to get so good. I'm ready to take it to the next level.

**What's been holding you back?** My putting hasn't been great over the past two seasons. Reading the greens and the speed have been my biggest challenges. I thought it was my putter—but two new putters later, it's not the putter.

**What are your favorite places to play?** The two most special places I've played are the Princeville Resort on Kauai, Hawaii, and Dye Fore at Casa de Campo in the Dominican Republic. And I love my club, Fiddler's Elbow in New Jersey. We have three fantastic eighteens.

**Do you have a favorite golfing moment?** My first hole in one happened in Jacksonville, Fla., at a place called Mill Cove Golf Club. I also have a great memory of hitting the green on the 17th at TPC Sawgrass. That's stuck with me—because I haven't been able to do it since!

**Are you a big believer in golf as a business tool?** It's an amazing tool if you have a client who loves golf. When you offer someone the chance to play, even though you may still talk business, you're doing it in the context of something they really enjoy. It changes the dynamic and the tenor of the conversation.

**Mentoring and sponsoring women in business is a key focus for you. Does golf play a role in that?** Absolutely. In the summer, I try to find a group of junior women in the company who either play golf or are interested in playing and take them out. Because golf isn't intimidating at all if you go out with someone who is patient and can tell you the ins and outs of the game.

Harris, who is determined to lower her handicap this year, loves golf's mental and physical challenge.



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# *The* Innovators 2015



*Golf has always been a thinking person's game, but true innovation happens when bright minds see the sport in brand-new ways. Here, in their own words, are the stories of seven heady game changers.*

Interviews by Sean Zak

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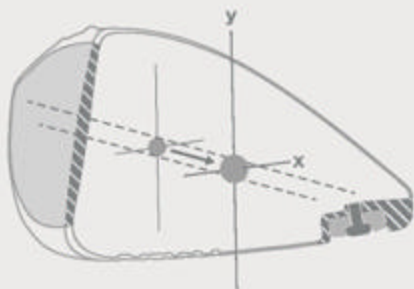
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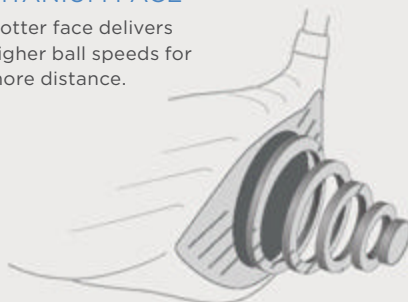
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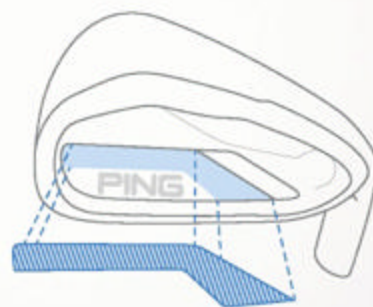
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# The Innovators

## THE SPOKES MAN

### Todd May

50, inventor of the Golf Bike; president of Higher Ground Golf Co.



#### Giving biking and birdies a spin

Cycling and golf are my two favorite hobbies, but they always competed for my time. When I played too much golf, I lost my biking endurance; and when I spent too much time on my bike, my handicap ballooned. Five years and many tires and metal frames later, we finally have the Golf Bike. My company's motto is "Fun, Fitness and Speed of Play," because that's exactly what you get. The light bag at the rear of the bike is designed to distribute the weight of 14 clubs evenly. The tires use extra-wide treads to grab any type of golf terrain but

not, like Bo Duke, leave tire marks. Those are the Golf Bike's physical features, but its greatest attributes have to do with exercise and time. I'll grab my Golf Bike after work and whip around the front nine in an hour, no problem. Without heading to the gym or even changing out of my work clothes, I've already got my golf fix and an evening workout. Keep in mind that the Golf Bike isn't for everyone. It was made for a biking golfer—an active player looking for more exercise than sitting in a cart all day. This is a sport, after all, but I love the idea of burning calories as I'm lowering my handicap.



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## THE WEDGE GURU

### James Ridyard

37, instructor;  
co-creator of Short  
Game Secrets



#### Applying full-swing analytics to short-game shots

The industry is transfixed by the full swing. I think it's important that we share a similar attitude about the short game. I spent two years measuring Tour players' wedge shots, learning that, as with all other shots, every kinetic aspect matters with the wedge: linear motion of body, lead-arm position, release profile. In *Short Game Secrets*, a video series that instructor John Graham and I created, we applied the analytical mindset of the full swing to short-game shots and found the optimums at which pros play their wedges. For example, the appropriate range of launch angle is 25 to 35 degrees, and the appropriate amount of

smash factor—the efficiency by which energy is passed from club to ball—is .95 to 1.05. What did it all mean? That teaching pros couldn't be lazy and continue to teach old short-game tactics. Stats that TrackMan has used for years to explain the full swing could now be applied to wedges. This shocked the industry at this year's PGA Show, where countless instructors left my demonstration with a new attitude about the short game. I'm not going to act like it's easy to grasp—I have a bachelor's in sports science. All that teachers and coaches need to understand is the lingo and the process. From there, it's all up to the players—and their wedges.



Ridyard hopes to drive home a crucial point to big hitters: wedges matter just as much.



# The Innovators

## THE PIONEER

### Vicky Whyte

61, junior director of Rio de Janeiro Golf Federation



#### Making golf an obsession in Rio, long before the Olympics

In 2005, I oversaw the creation of the first municipal golf course in Rio de Janeiro. Caddies from Rio's private courses wanted a place to play affordable golf, and thanks to a generous donation from the mayor, the nine-hole Japeri Golfe Clube was built. With Japeri's reasonably priced green fees, many other locals began to understand that golf was not an elitist sport. The success of the course was fantastic. And who were the most surprising participants? Brazilian children. It was their obsession with the game that inspired us to create the Little School of Golf. Japeri is located in a very run-down area of Rio, where children are often cast into crime-ridden streets after their standardized half day of school. Instead, the course and the Little School of Golf have become a safe haven for them. We morphed it into a place where students receive tutoring, social behavior education and, last but not least, a chance to learn the game. What began with 18 students in 2006 has now grown to 120.



RIGHT: ANDRUS MURRAY; WHYTE: FABRIZIO VENTURA/PRO GROUP

At the Japeri Golfe Clube, a love of the game is lifting the lives of Brazilian kids.

## THE BENEFACTOR

### Meredith Kirk

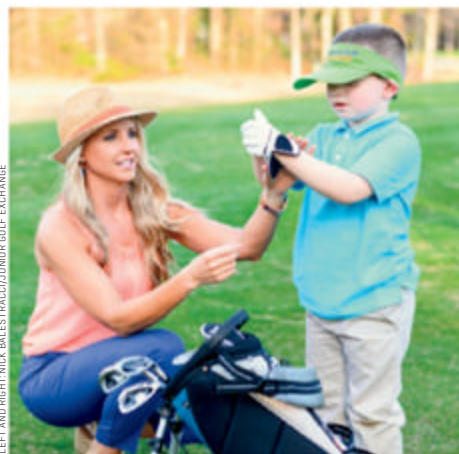
37, LPGA instructor; executive director of Junior Golf Exchange



#### Bringing equipment to kids, and kids to the game

I always have a pen and notepad on me. My friends might think it's weird, but I believe in it because I never want to miss an idea. Oddly enough, on one of my many five-mile runs, with the nearest pen miles away, I got my best idea yet. In July 2013, I thought up a nationwide network of courses that would use donated junior golf clubs to provide properly fitted clubs for kids at no cost. I sprinted the last stretch of my run and jotted down everything that came to mind, even the logo. That idea became Junior Golf Exchange, and it changed my life. Naturally, a few courses in my teaching area—Myrtle Beach—took hold of the plan. I was happy, but I

wanted this thing to go national. One of my friends always joked about me being a beauty queen, but I never took her seriously. *Maybe becoming Mrs. South Carolina is my chance*, I thought. Turns out, it was. Somehow, I won. The pageant win put Junior Golf Exchange's foot in the door. My 180 appearances as Mrs. S.C. was the platform it needed. People started talking, and courses started signing up. We've now pushed Junior Golf Exchange to 11 states and counting. Bermuda just jumped on board and Canada is probably next. There's still work to be done. The demand for donated clubs is very strong, and we need greater supply. Come to think of it, a corporate sponsor would be nice...wink, wink.



LEFT AND RIGHT: ANDRUS MURRAY; KIRK: JACOB BAILEY/JUNIOR GOLF EXCHANGE

Lending a hand to young golfers is beauty queen Kirk's enviable talent.

## THE FOOT DOCTOR

### Terry Hashimoto

57, VP of business development,  
BodiTrak Golf System



By eliminating your tilting and leaning, the BodiTrak will level the playing field.



### Helping golfers find the perfect balance

I've always had a mind for helping athletes. At first I was a head guy, trying to help football players with concussion awareness. In 2012, I approached the medical company PatienTech/Vista with the idea of creating an impact-measuring skullcap. They loved it, but wanted me to apply pressure-mapping research to the golfer instead. This turned me toward the feet, where there's more pressure than you would think, and we came up with the BodiTrak Golf System, a mat that measures balance distribution during the golf swing. Many people focus on the upper facets of the swing—the grip, takeaway, impact. But none of that matters when your base—the connection between

your feet and the ground—is out of whack. Four hundred sensors make up the BodiTrak mat, and these show exactly where golfers place their weight throughout the swing. You might lean too much on your rear foot at impact. Or maybe you tilt onto your heels in the backswing. In real time, the BodiTrak identifies problems that golfers like you have and helps achieve the balance necessary to transfer maximum energy into the ball. Perfectly aligned weight lets you maximize your distance and accuracy. Various teaching pros already swear by the system. Teacher Scott Hamilton uses it with PGA Tour guys like Chris Kirk and Russell Henley. We roll out a retail version in 2016. What has worked for pros will work for weekend players, too.

## THE 'VISION'ARIES

### Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott

Both 56, founders  
of Vision54



### Turning minds toward the unthinkable: a 54

Someone is going to shoot 54 on the PGA Tour someday—at least once players start thinking about all six elements of performance. We call them PTMESS, which stands for physical, technical, mental, emotional, social and spirit of the game. They're the basis of our Vision54 philosophy, which we teach in Scottsdale, Ariz. For golfers to reach their full potential, they need to make each of these elements a strength in their game, and as teachers for more than 25 years we know that each element can be taught and learned. Technical aspects are taught by all kinds of coaches, but *physical* fitness can be achieved,

*mental* focus can be harnessed, *emotional* equilibrium can be reached, *social* gamesmanship can be developed and *spiritual* passion for the game can happen anywhere. It's our job to help each golfer gain a stronger sense of these elements and not just focus on swing planes and finishing positions. We've worked with some pros, including Kevin Streelman. It was no surprise to us when he ripped off seven straight birdies to close out his final round and win the 2014 Travelers Championship. That performance gives us reason to believe someone will do the same over 18 holes—18 birdies for a score of 18-under. They'll need a vision to shoot that 54, something like Vision54.

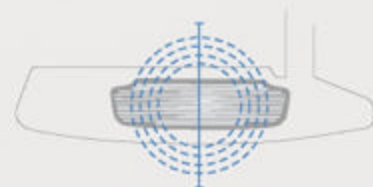
# CONTROL YOUR ROLL.

Engineered to fit a golfer's stroke tempo and feel preference, Cadence™ TR models advance putter fitting with two weight options. Traditional-weight models feature an aluminum insert (blue) for mid-to-faster tempos and improved lag putting. Heavy-version inserts (black) are stainless steel to fit slower tempos and improve results on shorter putts. Get fit today or visit [ping.com](http://ping.com). You'll be better for it.



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Aluminum (Traditional) and 17-4 stainless steel (Heavy) inserts are used to vary the head weights and match a golfer's stroke tempo and feel preference.

**PING®**  
PLAY YOUR BEST™

# ENGINEERED FROM GRIP TO SOLE.

Glide™ wedges ensure short-game performance and trajectory control on shots of every distance. The Dyla-wedge grip, CFS wedge shaft and head design combine to deliver our most versatile and consistent wedge line ever. Three bounce widths (TS, SS, WS) in multiple loft options are designed to fit your angle of attack and turf conditions. Get fit today or visit [ping.com](http://ping.com). You'll be better for it.

## MOISTURE-REPELLING FINISH

Chrome-plated 431 SS head improves spin and consistency in wet conditions.

## DYLA-WEDGE™ GRIP

A 3/4"-longer grip with markings at 1 3/8" intervals encourages gripping down for trajectory control and versatility.

## CFS™ WEDGE SHAFT

Optimized in weight, flex and balance for improved control, feel and stability.



## TS

THIN SOLE  
Shallow attack angle & divots.



## SS

STANDARD SOLE  
Moderate attack angle & divots.



## WS

WIDE SOLE  
Steep angle of attack & deep divots.

## LOFT-OPTIMIZED GORGE® GROOVES



FULL SHOTS  
47° - 54°

A 16° sidewall is optimized to maximize spin consistency for control on full shots.



AROUND THE GREEN  
56° - 60°

A 24° sidewall and tighter radius help compress the ball to maximize spin on short shots.

**PING®**  
PLAY YOUR BEST™



Chateau Elan Winery & Resort, Atlanta

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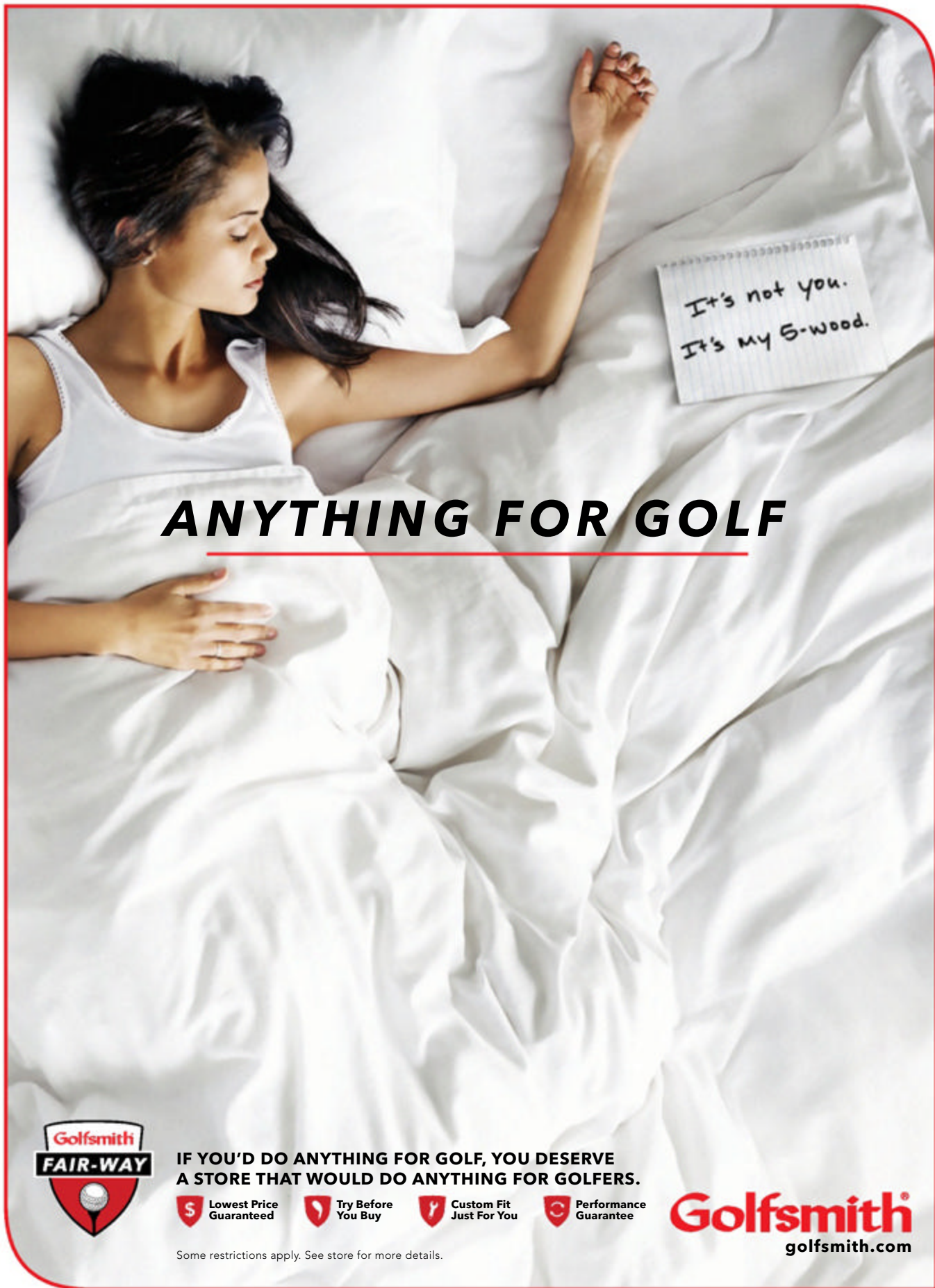
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# FAIRWAY WOODS & HYBRIDS

CLUB  
TEST  
2015

Game-  
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p. 120

Edited by  
**Rob Sauerhaft**  
Reviews by  
Michael Chwasky,  
Mark Dee and  
Brendan Mohler

**36**  
New Models  
Tested  
& Rated

On Golf.com   
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Better-  
Player Fairway  
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**A**S ANY OF OUR 40 CLUBTESTERS can tell you, fairway woods and hybrids have come a long way in recent years. Thanks to improved adjustability, livelier faces and friendlier sole designs, manufacturers now produce 3-woods that put your driver on notice and hybrids that can banish your long irons to the garage's cobwebbed corners. You're bound to find a new club (or more) among the 20 fairway woods and 16 hybrids our panelists tested at World Golf Village Resort in St. Augustine, Fla.

We divided both fairway woods and hybrids into two categories: better-player and game-improvement. Our research partner, Hot Stix Golf, fit each tester for loft, shaft flex and face angle, and captured data from thousands of range shots. Also, our tireless team took these sticks to the course to see how they performed in the heat of competition.

For even more ClubTest action, check out our tablet edition for 360-degree club views and videos featuring insights from our testers. Now off you go, into the woods!



The Ti's 75-gram tungsten-stainless steel sole plate helps give it the lowest, deepest CG of any Adams fairway wood.

"It's a boomer off the tee and easy to hit off the deck."  
—Alex Hsi, Handicap 9, Age 37

## ADAMS TIGHT LIES TI

\$250, graphite; golf.com/adams

**We Tested:** 3 (15°), 5 (18°) with Mitsubishi Bassara graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Easy to pick off tough lies and power through rough; produces a nice medium-high trajectory from both the tee and fairway; if you've got the game, it's relatively easy to shape shots in either direction.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Tight Lies Ti is one of the highest-rated models in this category; the entire face seems to qualify as the sweet spot; shots don't fall far off line, even on slight misses; some of the straightest woods in the test.

**Distance:** Among the longest models; clearly longer than many testers' regular 3-woods; very deep off the tee, and guys can pummel it from the fairway, too.

**Feel:** A favorite; big snap and pop

when you hit it on the screws; there's just the right amount of vibration to tell you when you hit it well; comfortable weight and lots of stability through the turf. **Look:** Alignment grooves are highly visible and helpful at address; compact shape fits nicely behind the ball when you've got a tough lie; pleasant package highlighted by the matte black finish.

### CONS

Some guys complain that the low-profile head isn't ideal off the tee; doesn't create as much roll out as one or two panelists would like; a few testers want the option of adjustable loft in a fairway wood.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Adams Tight Lies Ti is one of the top-ranked woods tested. It's an excellent all-around performer that provides plenty of distance and forgiveness.*

## CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA ALPHA 815

\$300, graphite; golf.com/callaway

**We Tested:** 16° (adjusts 15° to 18°), 18° (adjusts 17° to 20°) with Fujikura Motore Speeder 665 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** One of the top models; high trajectory can hold just about any green; easier to work right to left than many others; compact, heavy head cuts through rough all day long.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Here's where the club really shines—it's a fairway finder you can trust on the tightest tee shots; testers have total confidence that they can hit it wherever they're looking; straighter than just about everything that testers tried—including their current gamers.

**Distance:** Above-average yardage on well-struck shots—not a driver replacement but plenty long; this club can fly—it brings a lot of par 5s into reach.

**Feel:** One of the favorites:

These Big Berthas are smooth and solid with serious explosion at impact; about as stable as a wood gets, even from funky lies; light enough to go after it but still weighty through the ball.

**Look:** The small head and dark paint are traditional, almost like an old persimmon wood; no problems setting up behind the ball with lots of confidence—nothing to distract you at address.

### CONS

The Big Bertha Alpha 815's small head size turns off a few testers; for some guys, the compact clubhead doesn't work as well from the tee as a few larger models; distance doesn't stand out from the pack.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Big Bertha Alpha 815 is among the highest-rated models in the test. The club is a strong performer across the board.*



Two weights (3 grams and 30 grams) can be swapped to alter launch angle, spin rate and ball flight.

"These beauties have it all: accuracy, forgiveness, great feel and length."

—Chad Johnson, Handicap 10, Age 41



Moving weight close to the face creates a lower CG and added ball speed.

## CALLAWAY XR PRO

**\$240**, graphite; [golf.com/callaway](http://golf.com/callaway)

**We Tested:** 14° with Project XLZ Pro graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** One of the highest-rated models in this category; testers can hit it bullet straight or curve it at will; easy to pick it off the short grass and superb from tough lies; gets the ball up in the air on decent contact; you can dial in almost any trajectory—even recovery shots, like punches or curving it around trees, are in play.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** The XR Pro moves off-center shots back to the fairway more often than not; provides some real help with contact low on the face; solid shots fly like laser beams right at the target.

**Distance:** Predictable—similar to what testers expect from their own 3-wood; penetrating flight manages to get guys all the carry

they need to get the job done.

**Feel:** Crisp sound off the clubface; tells you enough to know how well you hit it; satisfying on well-struck shots, no shock to your hands on minor misses.

**Look:** One of the testers' favorites—the compact shape, black finish, and rounded clubhead are on the money; a club that puffs your chest with confidence as you pull it from your bag.

### CONS

Some testers like a little more help on off-center hits; a few guys would prefer having adjustable lofts to work with; the lack of an alignment aid on the crown bothered one or two panelists.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Callaway XR Pro is a handsome, highly maneuverable fairway wood. Better players can look forward to hitting any shot they can imagine.*

## COBRA FLY-Z+

**\$250**, graphite; [golf.com/cobra](http://golf.com/cobra)

**We Tested:** 3/4 (adjusts 13° to 16°) with Matrix VLCT ST graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The 3/4-wood produces a piercing ball flight that's great for keeping shots under control and out of the wind; no holds barred—you can move it however you want with a good swing; it's a pretty strong performer off the tee.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** With flush contact, finds the target just as well as many fairway woods; reliable on anything struck near the middle of the face—treats you like an old friend when you catch it slightly on the toe.

**Distance:** About what you'd expect on shots struck from the fairway; pretty good zip off the tee when you catch it right.

**Feel:** Seems like the face squashes

the ball at impact; a strong sensation when you nail it off the tee; impact with the Fly-Z+ is never unpleasant, even on slight misses.

**Look:** Guys like the choice of head colors, particularly the blue finish; between the bright crown and black clubface, the contrast makes it easy to aim properly; attractive shape and paint job leave nothing to distract you at address.

### CONS

Off-center strikes with the Fly-Z+ don't seem to get as much help as some testers would like; a few guys want more distance; ball flight isn't quite as high as other models.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Cobra Fly-Z+ is a strong hitter that looks cool and feels good. The adjustable hosel is a very useful feature as well.*



The SmartPad sole design enables the face to set up square, even after loft adjustments.



A straighter, flatter leading edge gets in and out of turf easier than last year's Covert 2.0 Tour.

## NIKE VAPOR FLEX

**\$250**, graphite; golf.com/nike

**We Tested:** 15° (adjusts 13° to 17°) and 19° (adjusts 17° to 21°) with Mitsubishi Diamana S+ Blue Board 70 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Strong off the deck—it can stand up to any lie you come across, good or bad; launches off the tee with a soaring, mid-high trajectory and no trace of ballooning, although it's pretty easy to generate any flight you want.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Big sweet spot gives you confidence that you'll get it going in the right direction; reduces sidespin off the tee to correct directional misses pretty nicely—can save you as long as you make reasonable contact.

**Distance:** The Vapor Flex offers respectable overall length with a good amount of roll out; solid hits wind up about where guys are accustomed to with their own clubs; enough power to replace your driver on shorter par 4s.

**Feel:** A little on the light side, which makes you want to swing aggressively; very soft and slightly muted at impact but nice just the same—you can almost feel the ball compress on the face when you pure it.

**Look:** The sparkling black paint and neon yellow swoosh are just plain cool; good traditional shape; Nike's neon volt color grows on some of our guys.

### CONS

Not quite as much correction on off-center hits as some others; a few testers want more informative feedback at impact; provides solid, dependable distance, but the Vapor Flex is hardly a bomber.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Nike's been on a fairway-wood hot streak in recent years, and the Vapor Flex continues the trend. Skilled players will enjoy the consistency that this visually appealing weapon delivers.*

## PING i25

**\$150**, graphite; golf.com/ping

**We Tested:** 14° (adjusts 13.5° to 14.5°), 18° (adjusts 17.5° to 18.5°) with PWR 65 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Boring trajectory drives through the wind with ease and provides plenty of roll; willing to go wherever you tell it to but easier to shape left to right; picks the ball out of nasty lies and shoots off low screamers.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** There's not a whole lot of sidespin—directional misses tend to be pushes and pulls; above-average correction is a stroke saver, helping you stay in play; maintains distance on misses about as well as you might expect.

**Distance:** The i25 offers acceptable length in most situations, making it comparable with the woods in the test; lower flight can grab you extra yards on fast fairways.

**Feel:** A sweet, snappy sensation at impact; the i25 swings lighter than some others but is stable and solid at the ball; minimal punishment on bad swings—you'll barely know you missed it.

**Look:** Big points for the matte finish and black-on-black racing stripes; no problem aiming with confidence—in fact, some guys think the striped crown is the best visual aid they've seen on a wood; very nice shape—one of Ping's finest.

### CONS

The i25 launches shots that are too low for certain swings; doesn't provide big-time carry distance that some seek; can be sensitive on mis-hits.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Just like last year, the i25 is one of the better fairway woods tested. This solid, all-around model appeals to low-handicappers who prefer balanced performance.*

The club's low CG promotes low-spinning shots.



**"This is a point-and-shoot club from good lies. I can hit any shot from the fairway."**

—Mike Gorski,  
Handicap 7, Age 53



MICHAEL CHINI

## TAYLORMADE R15

**\$280**, graphite; [golf.com/taylormade](http://golf.com/taylormade)

**We Tested:** 15° (adjusts 13° to 17°), 17° (adjusts 15° to 19°), 19° (adjusts 17° to 21°) with Fujikura Speeder 67 Evolution graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** These woods produce a consistent, medium flight that can be altered when necessary; if you've got the skills, there's no shot the R15 can't produce off the tee; the higher lofts are pretty good escape artists from rough.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

The R15 chops it out of most lies with fairly predictable results; good strikes yield a straight, razor-sharp ball flight; offers dependable forgiveness.

**Distance:** Gives testers ample length on well-struck shots; just about all you need off the tee; you can swing away with impunity once you get it set up for your move.

**Feel:** The head weight is evident from takeaway to impact; stable through contact without overly harsh feedback on misses; rock solid at impact, like you'd expect from TaylorMade woods.

**Look:** Testers like the shape of the R15 head—not too big and not too small; frames the ball well on the tee and off the turf; some panelists are glad to see that the white clubhead is back in style—and this one looks high-end.

### CONS

Some guys want more overall length; others prefer a more responsive message at impact; a few testers are slow to embrace the club's white color scheme.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The R15 is a very dependable fairway wood. The movable weight along the sole helps better players dial in precise shot shapes.*

## SRIXON Z F45

**\$280**, graphite; [golf.com/srixon](http://golf.com/srixon)

**We Tested:** 15° (adjusts 14° to 16°), 17° (adjusts 16° to 18°) with Mitsubishi Kuro Kage Black HBP 60 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Good, versatile performer that can handle shots from the rough as well as the fairway; repeating medium flight provides good carry and holds greens; an acceptable shot shaper—lets testers move the ball when needed.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

Low spin keeps the ball where you can find it; the Z F45 corrects toe misses and curves the ball back on line; distance holds up on minor mistakes.

**Distance:** Similar output on tee shots to testers' own sticks; compares pretty favorably with others in the test when struck well off the ground.

**Feel:** Not harsh but no cream puff either—firm and powerful sensation at impact; lets you know immediately if you hit it well; good balance through the swing with a nice, weighty clubhead.

**Look:** Can't ask for much more—the small, compact clubhead and classy black finish are throwbacks to the old days; square look at address inspires confidence in many testers.

### CONS

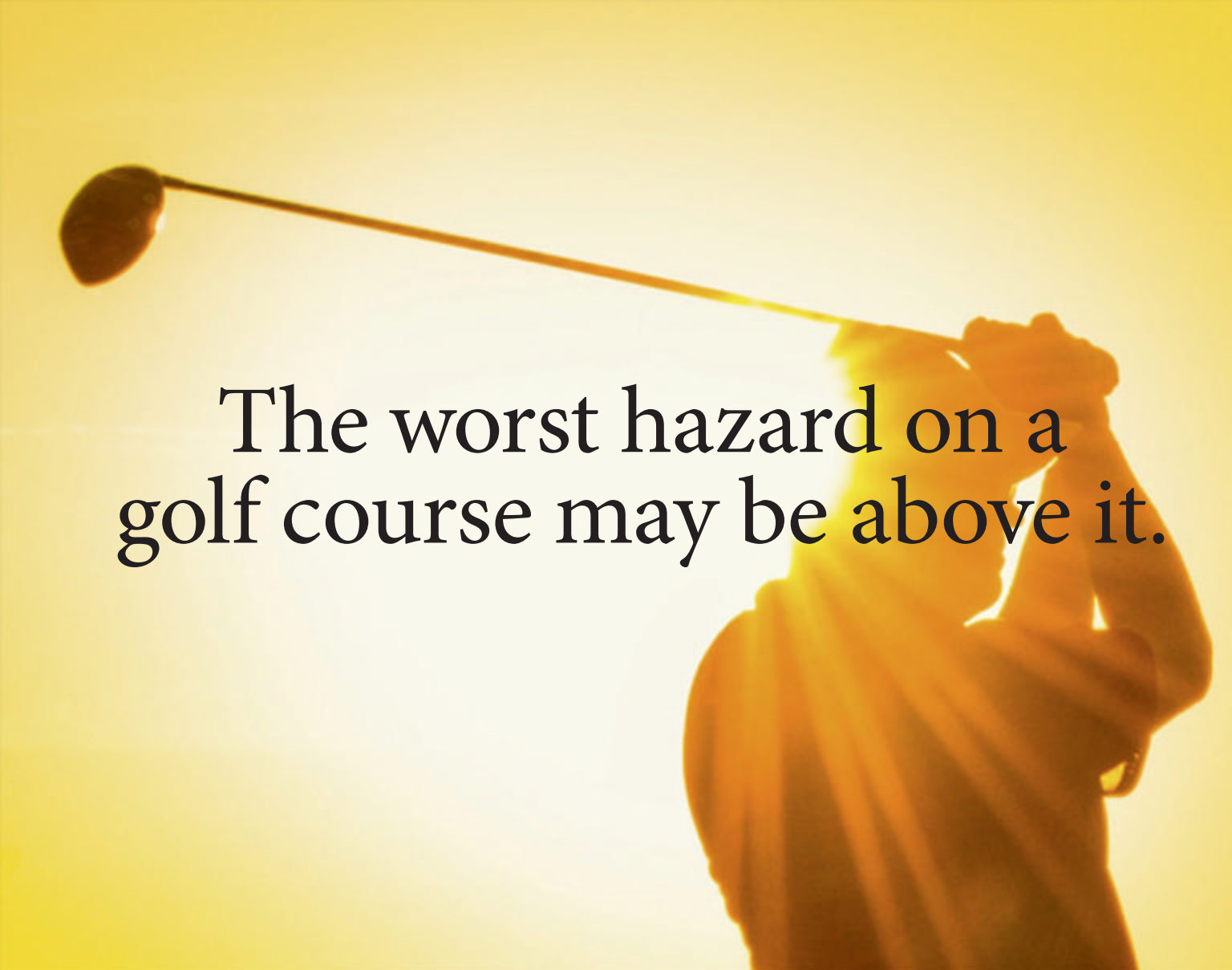
Some guys have trouble getting height on shots from the rough and other trouble lies; the compact clubhead is almost too small for a few testers; some of our panelists want more overall carry than these woods provide.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Possibly the best Srixon fairway woods in some time. Serious players would be wise to give them a serious look.*

MICHAEL CHINI



A 25-gram sliding weight helps players add draw or fade bias.



# The worst hazard on a golf course may be above it.

Golf courses are filled with obstacles and hazards: sand traps, streams, ponds, and the rough. With one more potential hazard above the golf course. Nearly 5 million people are treated for skin cancer in the United States every year. At MD Anderson, we hope you'll take a few extra moments to apply sunscreen to protect your skin (about 30 minutes before heading outside). To be even safer, seek shade whenever possible and wear a wide-brimmed hat as well as sunglasses. Call toll free 1-855-894-0145, or visit [MakingCancerHistory.com/PGATOUR](http://MakingCancerHistory.com/PGATOUR).



Ranked one of the top two hospitals for cancer care in the nation for 25 years by U.S. News & World Report.



Official Cancer Center  
of the PGA TOUR

## TITLEIST 915F & 915Fd

\$280, graphite; golf.com/titleist

"For my money, it's the best-feeling fairway wood."

—Jack Record, Handicap 9, Age 39

The sole channel and Carpenter steel face combine to produce faster ball speeds with lower spin than 913 woods.



**We Tested:** 915F in 15° (adjusts 14.25° to 16.5°) and 16.5° (adjusts 15.75° to 18°) with Mitsubishi Diamana M+ Red 60 shaft; 915Fd in 15° (adjusts 14.25° to 16.5°). Both tested with Mitsu. Diamana S+ Blue 70, D+ White 80 and Aldila Rogue Black 80.

### PROS

**Playability:** Among the highest-rated woods; easy to shape shots low, high or side to side; surprisingly simple to hit—the ball seems to fly effortlessly from just about any lie.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** One of the club's greatest strengths—consistently produces straight shots on command; saves you strokes but won't cover up your worst misses.

**Distance:** Stacks up with the longest woods; guys hit shots on tight par 4s knowing they won't give up much by leaving the driver in the bag.

**Feel:** A clear favorite—solid yet soft, like a persimmon wood but with a lot more power.

**Look:** The highest-rated model—clean, classic, and beautiful; lines up perfectly behind the ball.

### CONS

A few testers don't think there's enough of an improvement over the 913 woods; they can be difficult for some guys to hit from tight lies.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The 915's are some of the top fairway woods tested. These big hitters are precise, boast an elegant, understated look and feel great during the swing and at impact.*

## TOUR EDGE EXOTICS E8 BETA

\$300, graphite; golf.com/touredge



The deep face and forward CG contribute to a penetrating ball flight.

**We Tested:** 3 (15°), 4 (16.5°) with Aldila Rogue Silver 60 and Aldila Rogue Silver 70 shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Does what you need, from smashing tee shots to going for par 5s in two to getting it out of trouble; a piercing trajectory.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Very accurate from the tee—it's point and shoot, perfect for the tightest holes; corrects directional misses fairly well off the fairway, as long as you put a good move on it.

**Distance:** One of the longest clubs—hits it past many testers' current sticks; arguably the best model off the tee, a true driver replacement—very impressive distance at times.

**Feel:** The hot face launches the ball like a cannon; powerful on center strikes; hit it well and it gives you a nice reward.

**Look:** One of the favorites—a great cross between traditional and high-tech; testers like the non-glare matte finish and smallish head.

### CONS

Some testers say it's less functional from rough than other woods; no loft-adjustability options; best as a mini driver and not a fairway club—it doesn't straighten misses as well as its peers.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Tour Edge Exotics fairway woods have been known through the years as big hitters, and the E8 Beta carries on the tradition. It puts your driver on notice.*

## Tips to reduce your risk of ~~skin cancer~~

- Use sunscreen, always SPF 30 or higher. Apply a liberal amount (about the size of a golf ball) 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours.
- Stay in the shade. Look for shady areas when outside.
- Cover up. Wear dark, tightly woven clothing to protect your skin from the sun.
- Wear a hat. Pick one with a large brim to protect your ears and neck.
- Put on sunglasses. Look for lenses that provide both UVA and UVB protection.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
MD Anderson  
Cancer Center



Official Cancer Center  
of the PGA TOUR



Redesigned slots along the sole and crown efficiently distribute flex across the face.

## ADAMS TIGHT LIES

**\$200**, graphite; [golf.com/adams](http://golf.com/adams)

**We Tested:** 14°, 16° with Mitsubishi KuroKage graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The Tight Lies is versatile and easy to hit from a variety of lies; smallish, low-profile head with cambered sole cuts through rough and leads to smooth contact; sends the ball consistently straight, with a medium trajectory and good roll out.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

Does a good job of minimizing sidespin to keep the ball on target; Tight Lies woods are relatively accurate from difficult lies.

**Distance:** Wonderfully consistent length from tee to fairway and off good lies or poor; mis-hits are punished only slightly; pretty good overall distance.

**Feel:** Nicely weighted, with a head-heavy feel; clubhead moves smoothly through the swing and

remains stable through the ball; face imparts a responsive, soft feel at impact, with off-center hits providing just enough feedback.

**Look:** Tight Lies woods look like clubs that you can really launch out of the thick stuff; compact, low-profile clubhead and matte black finish boost confidence; speed slot on the crown blends into the design, a notable improvement over previous models.

### CONS

For a few guys, these woods don't offer enough help; some testers find the smaller head a bit intimidating and would prefer an alignment aid on the crown; less workable than some models in the test.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Tight Lies woods provide a good combination of feel, forgiveness and consistent length. Testers like the performance off the tee and from trouble lies.*

## CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA V SERIES

**\$240**, graphite; [golf.com/callaway](http://golf.com/callaway)

**We Tested:** 5-wood and Heavenwood with Mitsubishi Bassara E-Series graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Best in class; testers agree that these woods put you in a position to score; the light head plays great off the tee and from a variety of lies, even thick rough; somewhat workable but they want to go straight, producing a high, repeatable flight that allows shots to land softly on greens.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Very strong performers—lots of help all across the face; misses keep their distance and follow a straight line admirably.

**Distance:** These give you plenty of yardage—as long or slightly longer than most testers' current models—but the raves come for consistency since these hit the number, time and time again.

**Feel:** Lovely and light through the swing,

yet easy to tell where the head is at all times; the weight, balance and shaft kick make the club feel like it's doing all the work, and they also promote a repeatable swing; provides just enough at impact to let you know how you hit it.

**Look:** Handsome, low-profile head is classic Callaway; the contoured, V-shaped sole looks like it won't have any trouble getting the ball airborne or hacking through rough; cartoon of Isaac Newton on the sole adds a fun touch.

### CONS

The shiny head could be an issue for players who prefer a matte finish to reduce glare; some higher-handicappers would like a larger head.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *This is the top-rated game-improvement model tested.*

*Reviewers rave about how easy it is to swing and hit well. Callaway's V Series takes the fear out of fairway woods.*



The "Warbird" sole helps get shots airborne with ease from scary lies.

**"These are so easy to play. After all, straight is great!"**

—Eric Jack, Handicap 14, Age 56

COURTESY CALLAWAY

MICHAEL CHINI

Prices listed are for one fairway wood.



COURTESY CALLAWAY

## CALLAWAY XR

**\$230**, graphite; [golf.com/callaway](http://golf.com/callaway)

**We Tested:** 3 (15°), 5 (19°) with Project X LZ graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The compact head makes it easy to work the ball; medium to high flight off the tee, with a lower, more penetrating trajectory from fairway lies.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Covers up directional misses from the tee and fairway; with the XR, testers could anticipate consistent shot shape and plan accordingly.

**Distance:** Well-struck shots are on par with the rest of the group; relatively low spin rates make these strong off the tee.

**Feel:** The XR woods offer a crisp, firm feel on good hits; stable shaft with no head twisting through the impact zone; plenty of feedback on mis-hits.

**Look:** Traditional, medium-profile head inspires confidence; aiming is a snap with an "X" marking the middle of the face and Callaway's alignment "V" embossed on the crown—just line up the letters.

### CONS

Natural ball flight is too low for some testers; expect a bit of a learning curve in order to hit this well on the fairway—it's not as forgiving off the deck as some others in its class, including Callaway's V Series; a few guys want a softer sensation on mis-hits.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *For stronger players, the XR woods deliver a powerful flight, added maneuverability and dependable shot-to-shot performance. It's a nice option off the tee on short or tight driving holes.*

MICHAEL CHINI

## CLEVELAND CG BLACK

**\$200**, graphite; [golf.com/cleveland](http://golf.com/cleveland)

**We Tested:** 15°, 18° with Mitsubishi Bassara E-Series graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The light weight makes them easy to swing, and the clubs reward a smooth tempo; workable for a variety of shots; good results from the tee, fairway and out of tough lies.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** One of the tops in the test; the center of the club finds its way back to the ball; misses aren't heavily punished for distance or directionally.

**Distance:** The CG Black woods are decent performers, given the solid rollout; misses yield more yardage than testers expect; slower-swinging players seem to get the most out of these sticks.

**Feel:** Nicely balanced, light heads make these fun to swing; the CG Black

is stable at impact, with a soft pop when hit well; the feel on mis-hits is also soft but telltale.

**Look:** These live up to the name, with a traditional head and deep face covered in matte black—no logos or alignment aids; a nice, clean look that cuts glare in sunny conditions.

### CONS

Not the longest clubs in the field; some testers lose track of the light head during the swing; the clubhead is larger than others prefer and lacks a useful alignment aid.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Best suited for smooth-swinging players looking for a lightweight fairway wood that delivers a penetrating ball flight. It's no sweat to swing, good contact comes easily, and the clean design will appeal to minimalists.*



Four distinct face thicknesses—thickest in the middle and thinnest in the extreme heel and toe—offer more consistent distance on mis-hits.





The MyFly8 hosel lets you adjust loft changes within a 3° range.

## COBRA FLY-Z

**\$230**, graphite; golf.com/cobra

**We Tested:** 3/4 (adjusts 13° to 16°) with Matrix VLCT SP graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The Fly-Z produces a low, boring, repeatable flight with nice runout; a bit of draw bias, though several testers find it easy enough to work either left or right; long and straight off the tee; the sole glides over fairway lies; adjustability is a plus.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

Admirable distance and direction off the tee, even on off-center hits; the biggest and best help is with right-side misses—takes slices off the table; forgiving overall.

**Distance:** For a few players, it's a monster off the tee; others don't see mammoth results, but praise the combination of distance and forgiveness.

**Feel:** Heavy head lends stability and power through impact; nicely

balanced with the shaft; well-struck shots have a distinct "soft hammer" feel; softer overall than many others; feedback lets you know when you mis-hit it.

**Look:** Testers like how the smaller, low-profile head sets up behind the ball; the crown, contrasting face and Cobra logo on top of the head are helpful alignment aids.

### CONS

Not for players looking for a high ball flight, a lightweight head, or a simple, unadorned appearance; perhaps best for stronger players in the game-improvement category, as higher-handicappers may struggle to use it from rough or uneven lies.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Fly-Z's handsome look makes you want to give it a try. Converts will enjoy a heavier head that produces a repeating, boring ball flight and plenty of roll.*

COURTESY COBRA

## MIZUNO JPX-850

**\$250**, graphite; golf.com/mizuno

**We Tested:** 15° (adjusts 13° to 17°), 18° (adjusts 16° to 20°) with Fujikura Motore graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Repeatable, penetrating ball flight; loft adjustability allows players to alter carry and roll to suit their game or course setup; sleek head design gets through rough; capable of producing both draws and fades.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Point-and-shoot accuracy, even from some trouble lies; reduces sidespin for fairly straight, reliable shots.

**Distance:** Not the longest, but very good; flush contact sends the ball out there, and slight mis-hits show little change in distance; for some, the length remains similar across loft adjustments, with only the carry/roll ratio changing.

**Feel:** The JPX-850's greatest strength is

incomparable feel and feedback, similar to Mizuno irons; powerful, rubber-mallet sensation at impact and a sense of the ball hanging briefly on the face; testers want to hit it again and again to experience the feel; no harshness on slight mis-hits.

**Look:** Metallic bright blue stands out and turns heads; low-profile black face squares nicely at setup for all loft settings, with the Mizuno logo serving as an effective alignment tool.

### CONS

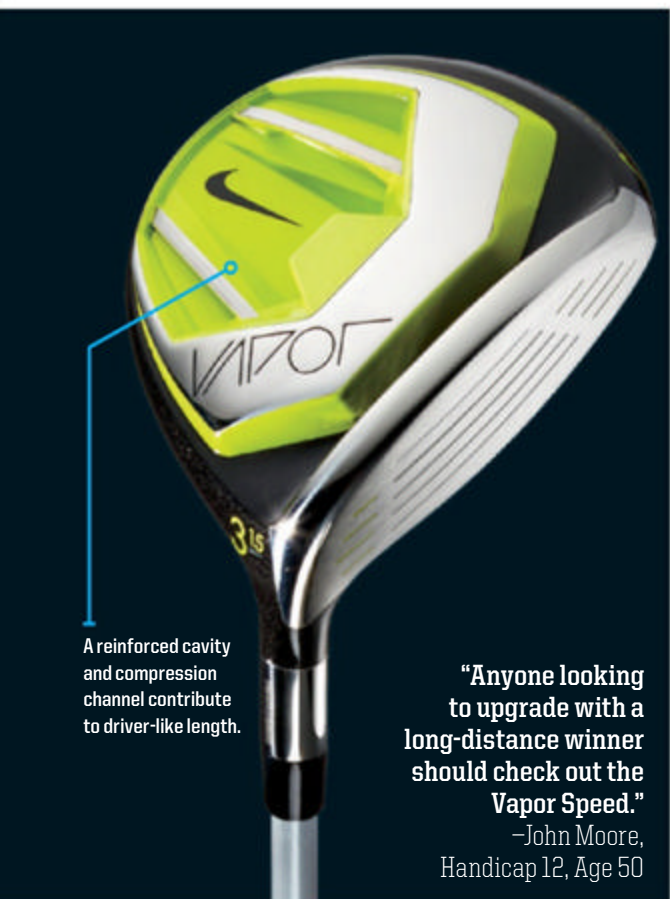
The royal blue color can turn off purists; it's not for those searching for extra length or a high-ball flight; some guys would prefer more help on misses.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *For mid-handicappers to better players looking for incredible feel, easy adjustability and a penetrating, repeatable ball flight—all wrapped in a sleek blue package.*

The sole is designed to flex more to increase forgiveness on shots struck low on the face.



COURTESY MIZUNO



A reinforced cavity and compression channel contribute to driver-like length.

**“Anyone looking to upgrade with a long-distance winner should check out the Vapor Speed.”**

—John Moore, Handicap 12, Age 50

JAMES WESTMAN

## NIKE VAPOR SPEED

**\$200**, graphite; golf.com/nike

**We Tested:** 3 (15") with Mitsubishi Fubuki Z 60 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Testers compliment its shot-to-shot consistency; excellent off the tee and fairway; good from light rough or sand; the Vapor Speed is very workable for a game-improvement wood.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Keeps the ball in play on errant mis-hits; typically goes where you hit it, with consistent distances.

**Distance:** For some guys, it's the longest in the test; repeatable results with the occasional rocket off the tee thrown in—you may not need a driver with this 3-wood in your bag.

**Feel:** Testers love the balance, which creates a stable feeling throughout the swing; a good energy transfer

to the ball culminates in a springy, metallic feel at impact; lots of feedback to the hands, which many players appreciate.

**Look:** The Angelina Jolie of club design—classy, bold, and a little bit of rock and roll; fans of the color scheme love its modern look, which has a touch of edginess.

### CONS

Not the most forgiving wood featured; some players prefer a more dampened impact feel on mis-hits; fluorescent swoosh and graphics aren't for everyone.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Vapor Speed is one of the better clubs tested. This model is toward the players' end of the game-improvement spectrum, but those with repeatable swings can expect plenty of distance and lots of impact feel.*

MICHAEL CHINI

## PING G30

**\$250**, graphite; golf.com/ping

**We Tested:** 3 (adjusts 13.5° to 15.5°), 5 (adjusts 17° to 19°), 7 (adjusts 20° to 22°) with TFC 419F graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** A high degree of workability—testers hit fades or draws off the tee and produce a consistent, penetrating, medium-high trajectory; shots launch easily from tight lies, rough and hardpan; the 7-wood is especially versatile from trouble—it even works on greenside shots.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Pretty high marks; shots hit near the heel and toe won't kill you; it reduces sidespin so mis-hits hold the line.

**Distance:** As long or marginally longer than the rest of its class; slight yardage loss on mis-hits but it's so consistent that players know what to expect.

**Feel:** Light overall, although it's well-balanced and easy to track through

the swing; very stable and comfortable on center and off-center hits; impact imparts a Goldilocks feel—not too hard, not too soft, but just right, with a “ping” that sends the ball flying.

**Look:** The innovative alignment system stands out on this medium-size, glare-resistant head—raised fins called “turbulators” point toward the impact zone and combine with white grooves on the face to help the setup.

### CONS

Some guys prefer a higher ball flight; works better with smooth tempos than super-aggressive swings; alignment aid system and “turbulator” design aren't for everyone.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *One of the top-rated models in the test. The G30 boasts a stellar combination of maneuverability, distance, feel and accuracy. Almost anyone would benefit from them.*



The G30's Carpenter steel face flexes more than the G25 face for livelier contact.

**“Anyone looking to improve their game will love the G30's. They're the total package.”**

—Tom Jennings, Handicap 11, Age 61



A larger speed pocket lets a bigger area of the face flex more.



**"Easy to hit and long. I might have to make an investment."**

—Bud Adler,  
Handicap 14, Age 73

## TAYLORMADE AEROBURNER

**\$230**, graphite; [golf.com/taylormade](http://golf.com/taylormade)

**We Tested:** 3 (15°), 5 (18°)  
with Matrix Speed Rul-Z 60  
graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Moderate to high flight—higher than usual for many testers; likes to work a slight draw and lots of carry; it performs well in a variety of situations, from rough to sand to tight lies; testers especially love it off the tee for its distance and consistency.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Shots hold their target line well on off-center contact—only a slight loss of accuracy on misses; slower swingers see the best performance.

**Distance:** Here's where AeroBurner shines: they're out-and-out bombers; great length off the tee and from the fairway; these don't lose much on off-center hits.

**Feel:** Lively impact feel—responsive, crisp, concise sensation; slightly harder feedback on misses lets you

know you've erred; the light club makes it easy to swing freely and smoothly, but it's well-balanced and has enough heft during the swing for most guys' taste.

**Look:** Low-profile, smallish heads easily set up square behind the ball; the black face, raised center portion on the crown and "AeroBurner" logo make alignment a snap; some guys love the white head and shaft.

### CONS

Some testers want more forgiveness in a game-improvement club; a few guys find that these lightish clubs favor slower swing speeds; others aren't huge fans of the white-on-white head and shaft.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The AeroBurner is one of the top clubs tested in the game-improvement category. It stands out as a long-hitting, easy-to-swing weapon. Especially fond of it are players with smooth, rhythmic swing tempos.*

## TOUR EDGE EXOTICS E8

**\$250**, graphite; [golf.com/touredge](http://golf.com/touredge)

**We Tested:** 3 (15°), 4 (16.5°)  
with Fujikura Exotics Pro 57,  
Fujikura Exotics Pro 62, and Fujikura  
Exotics Pro Tour 72 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The low-profile clubhead does a good job of getting through the thickest rough and works well from a variety of trouble lies; strong, penetrating flight off the tee; straight is the typical shot, but it's possible to work draws and cuts, too.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Most testers find that the Exotics E8 is more forgiving from the tee than from the turf; shots hold their line well enough; better players with higher swing speeds get the most out of them.

**Distance:** Tons of rollout from a long, piercing ball flight; hit properly, they give you a real shot at scoring on par 5s; mis-hit one a little and you'll still be close enough to your target to scare par.

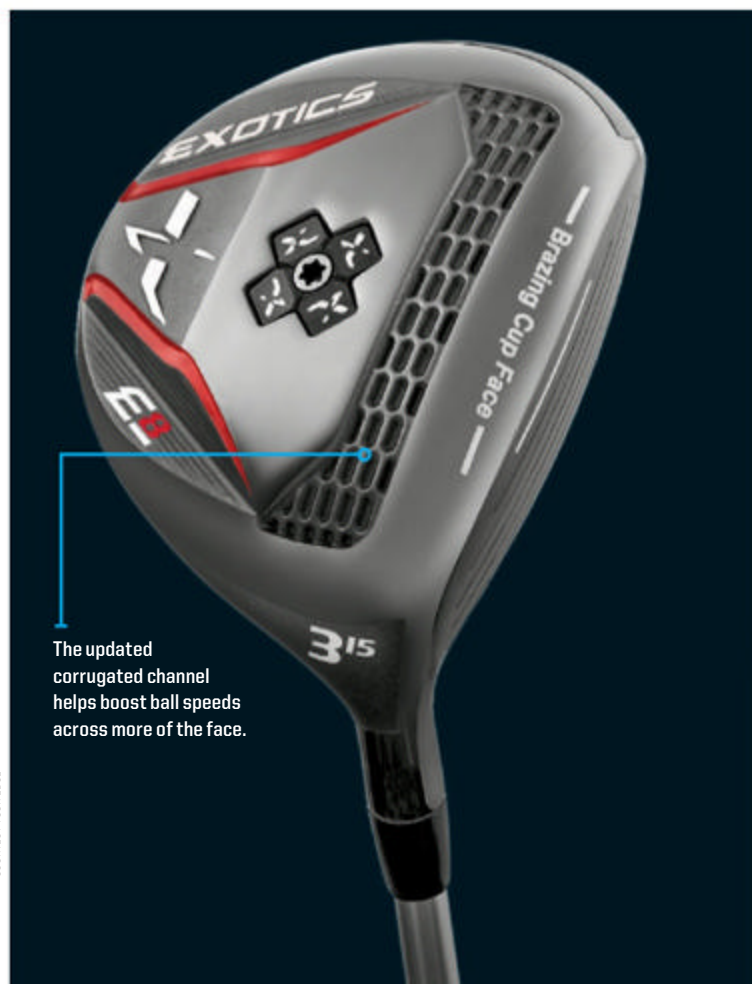
**Feel:** The Exotics E8 is a heavier-feeling head that remains stable through impact and rips through all kinds of rough; firm, concentrated feel at impact; the face sends the ball flying like it's on a trampoline.

**Look:** Classic head shape in a striking, matte charcoal finish; white bottom groove and "E" alignment aid on the crown make lining up easy; face is relatively shallow, yet the larger body inspires confidence.

### CONS

Guys who want maximum forgiveness should look elsewhere; heavier head and firm feel at impact isn't for everyone; others prefer a higher typical ball flight.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Exotics E8 is a real ripper off the tee. Best for mid-to low-handicappers looking for a lower trajectory. Our faster-swinging testers enjoy them the most.*



The updated corrugated channel helps boost ball speeds across more of the face.

## WILSON STAFF D200

\$200, graphite; golf.com/wilson



Players can swing the light club faster with the same effort.

**We Tested:** 3 (15°) and 5 (18°) with UST Mamiya Elements Chrome graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The heads cut through rough well; some shot shaping is possible—ample workability from the tee puts you where you want to be; testers like the medium flight and soft landings.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** A modest amount of directional and distance forgiveness; they do a decent job reducing sidespin; in general, shots want to go straight.

**Distance:** These woods move the ball out there, despite their light weight; some testers find that a slower swing produces more distance; most say the length is on the long side of adequate.

**Feel:** The D200's forte—soft, solid and stable at impact; the light club

is capable of generating plenty of speed while remaining well balanced and easy to track through the swing; provides a good deal of feedback on all hits.

**Look:** An understated clubhead that's reasonably wide from heel to toe—appears easy to hit; the chrome shaft and brushed silver face contrast with a matte black head, which looks ready to charge sitting behind the ball.

### CONS

Not for players who need a lot of help or want a weighty clubhead; fairly difficult to get a high ball flight from fairway lies; it takes some getting used to since slower, rhythmic swings have the best results.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The D200 is best suited for players looking for a lightweight fairway wood with pleasant feel.

COURTESY WILSON STAFF



✓Yes



✓Yes



xNo



✓Yes



✓Yes



✓Yes



✓Yes



✓Yes

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## ADAMS RED

**\$230**, graphite; golf.com/adams

**We Tested:** 20°, 23° with Matrix Altus 85 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Easy to control flight through shot shaping and adjustability; default trajectory is low and penetrating; nimble head handles challenging lies with ease; maneuvering shots is precise and video-game fun; works hard to eliminate the left miss; reliable and customizable given the sole's weighting system.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** The Red's versatile sole and stable head can escape any unwanted lie, including hardpan, lush rough or sand; the worst swings get a mere slap on the wrist.

**Distance:** Surprisingly adequate length out of a small clubhead; a touch longer than its long-iron counterpart, but it offers the kind of distance control you don't get out of a 3-iron or 4-iron; slight mis-hits still travel a playable distance.

**Feel:** The heavy head provides a meaty sensation, with a nice muted crack at contact; the head lets you know when you really nail it; very stable—you don't have to worry about the clubface twisting at impact.

**Look:** This club's best asset—testers love how the iron-like, matte black head contrasts with the white scoring lines; one of the smaller heads in the hybrid category, it maintains a deep-face look; sits squarely behind the ball for comfortable and simple alignment.

### CONS

Small head doesn't provide the forgiveness some guys need, others find that the low-ball flight is too close to that of a long iron; the heavy feel takes getting used to.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *You'll find both playability and control in the Adams Red. It's a true player's club that looks and handles about as much like an iron as any hybrid you'll find.*

## CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA ALPHA 815

**\$250**, graphite; golf.com/callaway

**We Tested:** 20° (adjusts 19° to 22°) with Fujikura Speeder 865 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** A big-time shotmaker in a sleek package; the flight is soaring and dependable but still responsive to directional commands; the head obliterates bad lies compared with a long iron.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Tops in its class—as forgiving as any hybrid tested; easily launches high and lands softly, even on slight misses; hitting shots off the deck is like throwing darts at the green.

**Distance:** One of the longest, but not to where you'll be over every green; toe and heel misses fly well; exceptional distance and carry numbers on the course are backed by TrackMan numbers on the range.

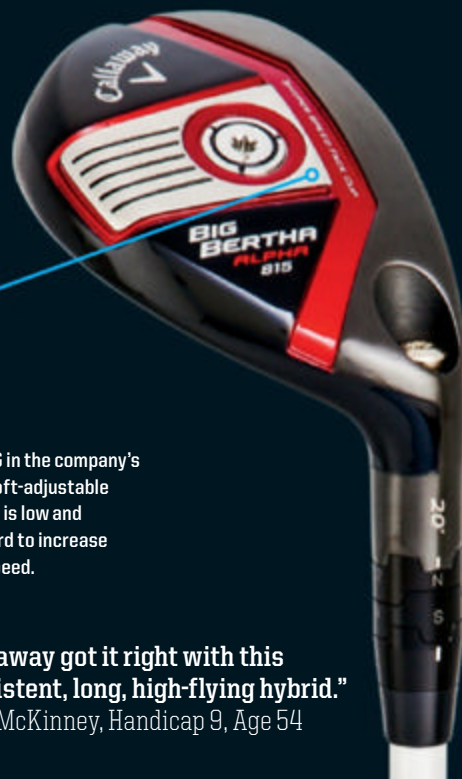
**Feel:** The stout, stable head gives informative feedback but doesn't buck you when mis-hits occur; ball springs off the face with a super-sweet sound.

**Look:** Testers like the midsize, pear-shape head; the tight and tidy appearance is simple, efficient and not distracting; the Big Bertha Alpha 815 is attractive, without the need to be flashy, shiny or gaudy.

### CONS

One or two testers want more workability in this player's club; a couple of other guys could use a bit more control.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Big Bertha Alpha 815 is one of the top models tested. It shines in every category and, above all, can execute any shot you dream up. Plain and simple, it's a great club.*



The CG in the company's first loft-adjustable hybrid is low and forward to increase ball speed.

**"Callaway got it right with this consistent, long, high-flying hybrid."**  
—Jeff McKinney, Handicap 9, Age 54



The Vapor Flex produces a 2° higher launch than last year's VRS Covert 2.0 Tour.

MICHAEL CHINI

## NIKE VAPOR FLEX

**\$230**, graphite; [golf.com/nike](http://golf.com/nike)

**We Tested:** 3 (adjusts 17° to 21°) with Mitsubishi Diamana S+ Blueboard 80 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Quite versatile—the Vapor Flex puts a player in total control of trajectory and shot shape; slightly deeper head helps from out of the rough, while the sole carves through other poor lies; easy to rip repeatable draws.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Pretty decent directional forgiveness; get used to watching baby draws and fades come off this club from any lie; Vapor Flex produces relatively good launch on thin hits.

**Distance:** Low-spin head generates roll off the tee and keeps shots from ballooning—won't force you to relearn your yardages; consistent if not mind-blowing distance; slight adjustments help dial in desired yardages; sneaky length on mis-hits.

**Feel:** Silky smooth yet powerful on pure strikes; impact is a balance between crisp and muted, firm and soft; weighty head produces a jumping sensation at impact, no matter the contact.

**Look:** The new, more serious appearance is better than in previous models; the traditional setup hides the technology beneath and frames the ball well.

### CONS

Not the longest model tested, especially on mis-hits; some panelists want more differentiation in feel on good and bad shots; other guys find that there's not enough help on their misses.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Vapor Flex is an attractive, consistent hybrid with a variety of loft-adjustability options. It offers better players the flexibility to maneuver shots with relative ease.*

## PING i25

**\$130**, graphite; [golf.com/ping](http://golf.com/ping)

**We Tested:** 19°, 22° with PWR 80 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The narrow head cuts like a hot knife through nasty lies and provides ultimate trajectory control from good ones; strong and long off the tee—piercing flight plays surprisingly soft into the green.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** A one-way ticket to your target from any lie; misses are slight draws or fades that fly farther than expected; small head offers pinpoint accuracy and also disguises a good deal of forgiveness.

**Distance:** Plenty long by anyone's standards; consistent with tight dispersion; slight misses aren't dead and good strikes won't balloon; expect the i25 to travel farther and fly higher than your long irons.

**Feel:** Stable and responsive at impact; comforting balance—feels like the head will follow the right path through the ball every time; small difference between center strikes and misses.

**Look:** Testers like the simple, matte black, all-business look; clean, smooth sole is as helpful as it appears; subtle and subdued, like a hardworking tool you can rely on for a number of jobs.

### CONS

A few testers want to feel a greater distinction between mis-hits and pure strikes; others want loft adjustability; one or two guys prefer a weightier look.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *As it was last year, it's among the better hybrids. The nimble head provides the workability and control of an iron with the launch and distance of a hybrid. Not fancy—just top-notch performance at a good price.*



**"The i25 is a straightforward club that does its job very, very well."**

—Jon Dobberstein, Handicap 5, Age 46

Minimal bulge-and-roll on the face make it easy for players to maneuver shots.

MICHAEL CHINI



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The speed pocket along the sole helps maintain ball speeds on low contact.

## TAYLORMADE R15

**\$220**, graphite; [golf.com/taylormade](http://golf.com/taylormade)

**We Tested:** 19° (adjusts 17.5° to 20.5°), 21° (adjusts 19.5° to 22.5°) with Fujikura Speeder 77 Evolution graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Testers love the controllable trajectory, even from shots struck out of deep grass; you can hit the R15 high and stop it on a dime, or keep it low to cheat the wind and run one up; if you have the skill, this club will execute any shot you tell it to; testers appreciate the loft-adjustability feature.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Help is there on all but your worst swings—big misses with the R15 are rare; deadly accuracy off the tee, with all the precision you need to fire at the green; it delivers even if you don't pure it every time.

**Distance:** The club's biggest asset—look no further if you need a few extra yards to fill a gap; mis-hits are

reliably long, and they roll out.

**Feel:** The R15 provides a firm, satisfying sensation on center strikes; stable through the ball and strong on shots from trouble lies; slightly lighter head than others.

**Look:** Testers like how the white head contrasts with the black face; the small head and adjustable hosel catch your eye but aren't distracting; the tall face provides a comfortable hitting area.

### CONS

Some testers want a more distinct feel across the clubface; for other guys, it tends to roll out too much and won't hold greens from long distances.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The R15 is an attractive, strong hybrid that can pull off almost any shot you imagine. It can change your game off the tee and help you reach greens on lengthy par 4s or shorter par 5s.*

## TITLEIST 915H & 915Hd

**\$250**, graphite; [golf.com/titleist](http://golf.com/titleist)

**We Tested:** 915H 21° (adjusts 20.25° to 22.5°) with Mitsubishi Diamana M+ Red 60 graphite shaft; 915Hd 20.5° (adjusts 19.75° to 22°) with Mitsubishi Diamana D+ White 90 graphite shaft. Both models tested with Aldila Rogue Black 85H and Mitsubishi Diamana S+ Blue 70.

### PROS

**Playability:** Top performer in this category; effortless height; working the ball is addictive; shines from all types of lies, especially from rough; the combination of strong playability and an adjustable hosel makes the 915 a winner.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Spot-on accuracy with the 915's—if you're dialed in, you know exactly where the ball's going; plenty of forgiveness packed into these sleek heads; pretty good results on low contact.

**Distance:** You won't find yourself coming up short with the 915's—a few testers picked up as much as 10 extra yards over their current hybrids; consistent lengths, even on minor

misses, allow testers to focus their attention on other things.

**Feel:** A special feeling when you hit it well; the heavy head is solid and stable during the swing and through tough lies; explosive, springlike sensation on center hits—you may want to spend all day pounding this on the range.

**Look:** An ideal combination of class and pizzazz; sleek and nimble with no surprises at address; testers love the jet-black finish with a subtle metallic touch; the 915 head shape inspires shotmaking.

### CONS

The 915's are not quite as forgiving as a few testers would like; one or two guys find the adjustable hosel distracting to look down at.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The top model tested in the better-player category. The 915H and 915Hd check just about every box the testers look for. You may never want to hit a 3- or 4-iron again after trying these on for size.*



The 915H is for sweepers, while the smaller-headed, more offset 915Hd suits those with steeper swings.

**"This is my new MVP. I wish I could fill my whole bag with this club."**—Dan Zegura, Handicap 6, Age 49

COURTESY TITLEIST

MICHAEL CHINI

Golf taught me:

- ☐ Responsibility
- ☐ Judgment
- ☐ Confidence
- ☒ All of the Above



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Softer  
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THE NEW **TOUR-Z** GOLF BALL

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**[www.GoKickXBall5.com](http://www.GoKickXBall5.com)**



The cutouts in the sole and crown maintain the benefits of a dual-slot design.

## ADAMS TIGHT LIES

**\$180**, graphite; [golf.com/adams](http://golf.com/adams)

**We Tested:** 3 (19°), 4 (22°) with Mitsubishi Kuro Kage graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** A Houdini hybrid—the Tight Lies is versatile enough to put a little magic in your escape shots; the small, weighty head torpedoes through thick rough, pine straw—whatever crosses its path; sole design doesn't drag or dig; it's a natural high-flier, but in the right hands offers creative ways to attack pins.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

Accurate, obedient clubs that fly straight; for better or worse, shots don't move off the line they start on; the club manages your misses but doesn't erase them.

**Distance:** Favors precision to out-and-out power—no slouch, but there are hotter clubs out there; ideal gaps from loft to loft—a good choice to pinch-hit for a 3-, 4- or 5-iron; meaningful mileage out of rough and bunkers.

**Feel:** The Tight Lies is one of the best hybrids in this category;

substantial for its size—the dense clubhead generates a tight, tidy sense of compression at impact; choice balance makes it easy to swing yet hardy enough to withstand the tough stuff.

**Look:** Compact, minimalist setup with a clean, teardrop silhouette lets you focus on the task; looks like it can dig your ball out of anything; this Tight Lies version hides its tech under the hood—industrial underside and filled-in cutout in the sole project power.

### CONS

Some testers need more help on misses; these hybrids aren't short hitters, but there are better options for those only after distance; they don't exactly jump off the rack—a few guys find the graphics too plain and boring.

**BOTTOM LINE:** True to its Tight Lies DNA, it's a jailbreak specialist “par” excellence. For strong ballstrikers, few game-improvement models match this combination of versatility and control.

## CALLAWAY XR

**\$220**, graphite; [golf.com/callaway](http://golf.com/callaway)

**We Tested:** 3 (19°) with Project X SD graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The XR hybrid is effortless to draw and, with a little work, possible to fade, too; pretty decent rescue club—gets you back in play with reasonable distance; low, driving trajectory loves to cheat the wind.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** The XR is a fearless fairway-splitter when your swing is on, and it offers passable correction on your off days; easy to turn over without losing shots way left, and its tendency toward tight draws adds a measure of consistency; thin hits salvage solid yardage.

**Distance:** One of the longest across the board at the loft we tested; low, bullet-like draws jet off the clubface and run down the fairway like a scolded dog; doesn't take Tour-caliber acceleration to see big gains—the afterburners can kick in at any speed; more than a lone ranger, too—the 3-hybrid plays as long on the course as it does on the practice tee.

**Feel:** A muscular club, with a surprisingly sensitive side; hard, almost ceramic feel

at impact; ball seems to stay on the face a long time, and it comes off howling; provides more articulate feedback than many in its class; slightly head-heavy weighting responds well to smooth, easy swings.

**Look:** Matte black is in, and our testers aren't complaining; the XR hybrid has a simple, all-business setup at address, with a sporty look hidden on the sole; a number of guys appreciate the subtle aiming device—the raised “V” arrow on the crown points the way to the sweet spot.

### CONS

A few testers believe it lacks the playability and consistent forgiveness of its predecessor, the X2 Hot; the somewhat low ball flight means shots can come in too hot to hold some greens; a couple of guys would like to sense more stability as the club passes through the heavy stuff.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The XR is a power-hungry hybrid that offers gaudy distance. It might be a better fit for someone looking to replace a 5-wood than a 5-iron.



The XR's reconfigured head creates a 46 percent lower CG than in last year's X2 Hot.



These high-launching sticks let you swing faster without swinging harder, thanks to a low "swing MOI."

"Just a joy to use—I could put these in my bag tomorrow."  
—Jim Esther, Handicap 21, Age 62

MICHAEL CHINI

## CLEVELAND CG BLACK

\$170, graphite; golf.com/cleveland

**We Tested:** 19°, 24° with Mitsubishi Bassara E-series graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Sticks a fork in your long irons; expect reliably high, straight shots that the wind won't touch; rips right through the heavy stuff to dig out your ball and get it flying in the right direction; like a superhero, swoops in to rescue you when you're in a tough situation—it should wear a cape.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Hard-wired for consistency; misses lose less than most—all but the worst swings receive a full pardon; next to no sidespin—reduces big benders down to muted draws and fades.

**Distance:** Above average on balance, but they put a handful of guys in completely new territory; dependable mileage—easy enough to rein it in for approach shots or to step on one from the tee.

**Feel:** A controlled explosion at impact; light overall weight, though you wouldn't know it by swinging it: the CG Black delivers excellent, slightly head-heavy balance that puts you in the driver's seat; rock-steady through the turf; encourages an aggressive swing.

**Look:** Aptly named—matte black through and through; stands out for its sheer simplicity—looks like a golf club, not a billboard; sleek, slender and stealthy.

### CONS

Not for guys who like to bend the ball, since the flight can be a little one-note: high, straight; plain looking—some want more sizzle with their steak; no alignment aid.  
**BOTTOM LINE:** *The CG Black is the best hybrid in its class—it's at or near the top of every category. Almost anybody could benefit from putting these all-around monsters in play.*

COURTESY COBRA

## COBRA FLY-Z

\$200, graphite; golf.com/cobra

**We Tested:** 3-4 (adjusts 19° to 22°), 4-5 (adjusts 22° to 25°) with Matrix VLCT Altus graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Curved leading edge carves through thick rough; it won't dig into the turf; medium trajectory launches lower than many of its peers; adjustable head adds a touch of versatility for anyone who plays multiple courses.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** The Fly-Z minimizes damage to keep you in the hole; with hallmark accuracy, shots want to go straight; above-average correction on off-center strikes; in its element on the tee box—a go-to club for tight par 4s.

**Distance:** Honest yardage, about what guys expect out of each stated loft; maintains good length off the toe; thin shots scurry down the fairway; plays well into the wind.

**Feel:** A bright, metallic pop on center

contact, like catching a fastball on the barrel of an aluminum bat; muffles obnoxious feedback; balanced feel keeps your swing intact; weighting resonates with slower-swingers.

**Look:** A knockout—for many, the best-looking hybrid in the test; black finish with white accents comes off equal parts stealth and stout; slightly tall-faced shape seems like it can excavate your ball from any situation; several testers welcome the contrasting Cobra alignment aid.

### CONS

For a few stronger swingers, the head-shaft combination feels loose at high speeds; not a prime candidate for guys who want distance first and foremost; smallish head size might scare off higher-handicappers.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Fly-Z ranks as one of the top models tested. This first-rate option pairs laser-guided accuracy with model good looks.*



"Not even the Russian judge can dock points from these babies. The Fly-Z makes my 5- and 6-irons feel insecure."

—Kevin Kehoe, Handicap 18, Age 53

Cobra's MyFly8 hosel—which can add or subtract loft by up to 1.5° in half-degree increments—includes three draw-bias settings.





The "Shock Wave sole" helps the head to flex and deliver more energy back to the ball.

## MIZUNO JPX-850

**\$200**, graphite; [golf.com/mizuno](http://golf.com/mizuno)

**We Tested:** 16°, 19°, 22°, 25° with Fujikura Motore graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** Serves up basic draws and fades with enough control to offer multiple options on every shot; glides through rough; a solid trouble club, capable of back-from-the-dead escapes that will fluster your opponent and impress your pals.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

A repeatable club with no noticeable draw bias; on the tee, it's as easy as a fairway wood; shots stay true to the mission, even from the nasty parts of the course.

**Distance:** Consistent—no hot spots or dead zones like some other hybrids; lower lofts go plenty far, while higher numbers fly in line with the irons they're supposed to replace; in general, average to slightly strong distance, though a few guys absolutely murder these to the tune of 10 yards more than their current clubs.

**Feel:** The JPX-850 is a dense, heavy club that makes a full follow-through easy; very stable, with next to no torque on toe or heel hits; damp feeling at impact, with a touch of vibration on misses.

**Look:** High-gloss royal blue head stands out like a gleaming Corvette in a lot full of black Lincolns—this is how you bring color to a club; approaching a mini-fairway wood, with a full, rounded head that puts plenty of meat behind the ball; contrasting black face seems to help a little with alignment.

### CONS

Less forgiving than some of its peers; for all its flash in the bag, it lacks personality at impact; aside from the color, in many regards it's just another hybrid.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The JPX-850 is a well-rounded club with a standout color scheme. The head-heavy balance may appeal to smooth-tempo players.*

## NIKE VAPOR SPEED

**\$180**, graphite; [golf.com/nike](http://golf.com/nike)

**We Tested:** 3 (21°) with Mitsubishi Fubuki Z70 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The Vapor Speed is a simple club to use—to amend Nike's old motto, "Just Do It—and Don't Overthink It"; a fairly nimble hybrid that works well from turf and tee alike; sole slides through all kinds of scary lies without the urge to dig in.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Straighter than most—scrubs sidespin well and holds the line with no trouble; doesn't take much to get the ball going where you want it to; seems to have a wide sweet spot—minor misses are indistinguishable from dead-center strikes.

**Distance:** Solid distance—with the right set makeup, certainly not an issue; this hybrid trades some carry for roll—shots do a lot of work after touchdown; doesn't seem to lose much from the rough.

**Feel:** The Vapor Speed is a sweet-swinging hybrid; the "Speed" moniker

feels apt—light in the hands and fast through the ball; for a loud-looking club, surprisingly reserved at impact—expect a crisp, succinct click with a subtle nudge on misses; most guys are into the cushioned Tour Wrap grip.

**Look:** If we're calling other hybrids "modern," then Nike sent this one back in a time machine; rave-ready neon color scheme will certainly start (or end) conversations, but it looks like the company's tech team has your back; silver along the top line successfully implies "iron" at address.

### CONS

Some guys struggle to find a prevailing shot shape or ball flight; several panelists lose too much distance on toe and heel contact; for some testers, the bright yellow logo on the crown detracts from the overall package.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The Vapor Speed hybrid is easy enough to put in play. The tech-heavy design might appeal to club geeks with a futuristic bent.*



Nike added a "compression channel" behind the face to increase ball speeds.



MICHAEL CHINI

## PING G30

**\$220**, graphite; [golf.com/ping](http://golf.com/ping)

**We Tested:** 2 (17°), 3 (19°), 4 (22°), 5 (26°), 6 (30°) with TFC 419H graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** One of the highest-ranking hybrids in this category; fires off high, straight shots or slight draws from tee or turf; strong trajectory never seems to spin out of control; stands up to tough lies—nimble enough to pick it from tight spots and bunkers, but with the brawn to dive through deep rough.

### Accuracy/Forgiveness:

The G-series continues its mission of mercy; a dependable, accommodating club no matter how you use it; straight as a string, filters out most sidespin and helps misses bend back toward the target; a true bird(i)e dog—sniffs out flagsticks from long range.

**Distance:** Solid numbers across the board; doesn't take much to get the ball moving, and they respond well to a little extra oomph; dependable, graduated yardages from loft to loft—great for someone looking to

swap out a bunch of irons; long clubs get great roll off a low tee.

**Feel:** Mows through the ball with a crisp pop, then jumps off the face; full, rich impact sound; little to no shock on misses; excellent balance—the G30 head never gets lost during the swing.

**Look:** The G30 is top-tier—about as classic as a hybrid can get; clean, handsome setup looks right at home behind the ball; testers dig the two-tone black crown—the strip along the topline nicely intimates the setup of an iron.

### CONS

The G30 can be tough to turn on command—not the right choice if you live to curve the ball; a few guys want an alignment aid on the crown; a couple of testers find the feedback lacks variety.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Once again, Ping's G-series is one of the top clubs tested. The G30 fits the bill no matter what you want out of a hybrid. It's stylish, versatile and almost impossible to mis-hit.*

**"As good as it gets... I'm RoboGolfer, taking dead aim every time."**  
—Kirk Fischer,  
Handicap 10, Age 62

## TAYLORMADE AEROBURNER

**\$200**, graphite; [golf.com/taylormade](http://golf.com/taylormade)

**We Tested:** 3 (19°), 4 (22°) with Matrix Speed Rul-Z 70 graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The AeroBurner loves to rip long, driving draws; a flatter trajectory than its peers but easy enough to elevate; a dynamo off the tee, strong in the fairway and above average from the rough.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** A slicer's savior, with a draw bias that eliminates the right side of the course; it matches your level of consistency—you'll know when you miss one, but thinned or toed shots still chase out there a ways.

**Distance:** These puppies pack a punch—one of the longest in the group; a Howitzer off the tee—shots stay in the air forever and hit the ground screaming; off-center hits still have some muscle; sit back and let the AeroBurner do its thing—it doesn't take much to see mammoth results.

**Feel:** Outstanding at impact—it vaporizes the ball; greets center strikes with a soft, dense compression and offers a gentle nudge when you miss the sweet spot; stable through the turf; the definition of "crushed it."

**Look:** Shock white with a contrasting black face; sets up well—color scheme, raised bulge in the crown and text alignment aid all help to square it up.

### CONS

The draw bias is no joke—if you don't fight a slice, keep moving; not forgiving enough on misses for some guys; there's a lot going on over the ball—the raised, dimpled and bright white head can be distracting.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *The AeroBurner is one of the best hybrid models tested. If you fight a slice and want a boost off the tee, try the AeroBurner. It's a bomber with high marks for its distance and explosive feel.*



The updated speed pocket improves output on off-center contact.

**"What's it feel like to absolutely crush a ball? Buy this club and find out. Golf is fun again!"**—Mike Roynan,  
Handicap 15, Age 44

COURTESY TAYLORMADE



Removable sole weights (sold separately) change the center of gravity so you can dial in your preferred trajectory.

## TOUR EDGE EXOTICS E8

**\$200**, graphite; golf.com/touredge

**We Tested:** 19° with UST Mamiya Recoil graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** A smooth operator, easy to use from pretty much anywhere; flies on the higher side and obeys basic commands; search and rescue from deep rough—the head doesn't stop until it finds your ball and gets it to the short grass.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** Precise input yields pinpoint results; when taking aim at small targets from big distances, this club is as capable and confident as your best swing.

**Distance:** The Exotics E8 is a boomer, strong across the board; for some panelists, square contact flies five to ten yards past what they currently have in their bags; Tour Edge makes light work of long carries—you don't need to swing out of your spikes to pick up a few yards.

**Feel:** Brings "Pow!" to the party; smooth yet sturdy—a sledgehammer through the impact zone; Rock

of Gibraltar—stability at impact; instant, informative feedback beyond what many peers provide; shaft matches the weighty head—automatic release after impact.

**Look:** Most go for the understated, low-profile appearance; neutral, non-glare setup looks easy enough to get airborne; a few testers benefit from the alignment aid—"E" marks the sweet spot; the chrome shaft is kind of cool.

### CONS

Possibly the least-forgiving club in the group—the E8 holds you accountable for your bad swings, while its frank feedback lets you hear about it; plain Jane look is more standard than standout; best suited for better players.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A hard-nosed, hard-charging hybrid. For the lower-handicaps who can handle it, the E8 packs an ambitious combination of power and precision into one of the more versatile heads in its class.

## WILSON STAFF D200

**\$170**, graphite; golf.com/wilson

**We Tested:** 19°, 22° with UST Mamiya Elements Chrome graphite shaft

### PROS

**Playability:** The D200 can bail you out of ugly lies; a rare game-improvement club that allows stronger testers to maneuver shots in both directions with relative ease; a fairly low natural trajectory holds straight and steady through the wind.

**Accuracy/Forgiveness:** A consistent club that lands most shots in a relatively tight window; a straight-shooter with little unwelcome sidespin and no built-in draw bias to speak of; shots hug the line and hold the green; the D200 hides minor misses well.

**Distance:** The clubs provide pretty decent but not dazzling distances that substitute nicely for long irons; the D200 rewards a rhythmic swing tempo with repeatable results; low-launching tee shots on shortish par 4s generate a good deal of roll.

**Feel:** Some testers find the D200 surprisingly meaty for a superlight

club; the head feels substantial during the swing and stable through the ground; impact is clean, crisp and communicative, with more feedback than a lot of its competition.

**Look:** An attractive, understated, traditional club; exudes a vibe of low-key confidence, as if it doesn't need to shout to get your attention; neutral, flat-black finish with just the right amount of bulk behind the face; bonus points for the chrome graphite shaft, which looks like old-school steel.

### CONS

The D200 is a lightweight club, and for some testers it tends to get bossed around by heavy rough; there are easier hybrids out there to elevate; a couple of guys want more pop.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The D200 is a dependable, meat-and-potatoes hybrid that can do a little of everything—including put your long irons out of work. It's a natural extension of the chart-topping D200 irons, at a competitive price point.

A thin, Carpenter Custom 455 maraging steel face insert improves ball speeds on misses.



# MY MOM DIDN'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS. TODAY'S LUNG CANCER PATIENTS DO.

Twenty years ago, my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. She had very few places to turn, and lost a difficult struggle.

Today, we are on the brink of real breakthroughs in lung cancer research and there are significantly improved treatment options.

**Tony Goldwyn**  
Stand Up To Cancer  
Ambassador

And yet, more than 30% of all lung cancer patients still don't know about the therapies, specialists, and clinical trials available to them.

Lung cancer is a formidable foe, but we are finding new ways to fight it. Please visit [SU2C.org/LungCancer](https://SU2C.org/LungCancer) for questions to ask your health care professional and to learn about options that may be right for you.



Photo Credit: Kevin Lynch



Bristol-Myers Squibb

**STAND  
UP TO  
CANCER**  
[SU2C.org/LungCancer](https://SU2C.org/LungCancer)

Stand Up To Cancer is a program of the Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF), a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

# B<sup>Play</sup>Ball

## The ultimate buyer's guide to 66 models

**G**olf's not-too-distant equipment past seems a lot like the Stone Age. And that's an apt analogy, because a few short decades ago, balls were a lot like rocks. Limited choices meant you could either select a short-flying, high-spinning ball preferred by the pros, or a distance-oriented model that handled like a hunk of coal near the green. But technology today has changed everything. Balls now combine the best of both worlds: high-spin near the greens and distance off the tee. Whether you want a Tour model that blends length and greenside control,









a super-soft all-around performer or something in between, we've got the right ball for you.

The latest advancement in ball technology has yielded extremely soft, low-compression models that boost distance more efficiently than ever. These balls provide the everyday golfer with the kind of length, feel and short-game performance that rivals Tour-caliber designs. There's a lot to choose from, however, so here are 66 balls to consider for 2015, with in-depth looks at 22 new models from the industry's biggest players. Let's get rolling!

By Michael Chwasky  
Edited By Rob Sauerhaft

# BALLS IN YOUR COURT

Complete listings from all the leading ball manufacturers

BRIDGESTONE				
	<b>NEW</b>	Tour B330	\$45	Tour performance for 105+ mph swingers.
	<b>NEW</b>	Tour B330-S	\$45	More spin and a softer feel on scoring shots than B330.
	<b>NEW</b>	Tour B330-RX	\$45	Tour performance for players who swing less than 105 mph.
		Tour B330-RXS	\$45	More short-game spin than B330-RX.
		e5	\$29	See page 128.
		e6	\$29	See page 128.
		e7	\$29	See page 128.
		xFIXx	\$20	For players who want less sidespin at a value price.
		Lady Precept	\$20	Optimizes performance for slower swingers.
CALLAWAY				
	<b>NEW</b>	Speed Regime 1	\$48	Tour performance for players who swing below 90 mph.
	<b>NEW</b>	Speed Regime 2	\$48	Tour performance for players who swing between 90 and 105 mph.
	<b>NEW</b>	Speed Regime 3	\$48	Tour performance for players who swing faster than 105 mph.
		Chrome Soft	\$38	See page 128.
		Superhot	\$27	See page 128.
		Supersoft	\$22	See page 128.
		Warbird	\$18	Maximum distance at a value price.
NIKE				
	<b>NEW</b>	RZN Black Volt	\$46	See page 129.
		RZN Black	\$46	Tour performance with a firmer feel than RZN Platinum.
	<b>NEW</b>	RZN Platinum	\$46	Tour performance with a softer feel than RZN Black.
		RZN White Volt	\$30	See page 129.
		RZN White	\$30	Tour-like performance with a softer feel than RZN Red.
		RZN Red	\$30	Tour-like performance with higher ball speeds off the long clubs than RZN White.
	<b>NEW</b>	Hyperflight	\$25	Max distance with added feel around the greens.
		Crush	\$19	Max distance with a penetrating flight.
	<b>NEW</b>	PD Soft Volt	\$16	See page 129.
	<b>NEW</b>	PD Soft	\$16	Two-piece ball for players with moderate clubhead speeds.
	<b>NEW</b>	PD Long	\$16	See page 129.
<b>NEW</b>	PD Women	\$16	Two-piece ball for players with slower clubhead speeds.	
	Mojo	\$20/2 dz.	Long distance in a value pack.	
SRIXON				
	<b>NEW</b>	Z-Star	\$45	See page 130.
	<b>NEW</b>	Z-Star XV	\$45	See page 130.
	<b>NEW</b>	Q-Star	\$25	For players of all levels who want a straighter ball flight.
	<b>NEW</b>	Soft Feel	\$20	See page 130.
	<b>NEW</b>	Soft Feel Lady	\$20	See page 130.
TAYLORMADE				
	<b>NEW</b>	Tour Preferred	\$46	Tour performance with slightly more spin on iron shots than Tour Preferred X.
	<b>NEW</b>	Tour Preferred X	\$46	Tour performance with slightly less spin on iron shots than Tour Preferred.
		Project (a)	\$32	Tour-like performance for aspiring players.
		AeroBurner Pro	\$27	See page 130.
		AeroBurner Soft	\$20	See page 130.
TITLEIST				
	<b>NEW</b>	Pro V1	\$48	See page 131.
	<b>NEW</b>	Pro V1x	\$48	See page 131.
		NXT Tour	\$34	Tour-like short-game performance with firmer feel and less long-game spin than NXT Tour S.
		NXT Tour S	\$34	Tour-like short-game performance with softer feel and more long-game spin than NXT Tour.
		Velocity	\$27	Maximum ball speed and distance.
		DT SoLo	\$20	High-launching ball with soft feel for price-conscious players.
VOLVIK				
	<b>NEW</b>	White Color S4	\$45	See page 131.
		White Color S3	\$45	Tour performance with a softer feel than S4.
		Vista iV	\$45	Tour performance with less spin on long shots than Vista iS.
		Vista iS	\$45	Tour performance with more spin on long shots than Vista iV.
		Pro Bismuth	\$33	Tour performance for faster swingers.
	<b>NEW</b>	Crystal Blue	\$30	See page 131.
		Lady350	\$30	Low compression, lightweight ball for slower swingers.
		DS-77	\$23	High launching, built for distance and soft feel. Comes in pink, yellow or white.
WILSON STAFF				
	<b>NEW</b>	FG Tour	\$45	Tour performance with low compression core and soft feel.
	<b>NEW</b>	Duo Spin	\$27	See page 131.
		Duo	\$20	See page 131.
		Staff Fifty Elite	\$13	Soft compression for low driver spin.
		Tour Zip	\$25/2 dz.	A soft core and reduced spin at a value price.

Prices listed are per dozen balls

Prices listed are per dozen balls.

### Bridgestone e5

\$29/dozen

**It's for:** Players who need a higher ball flight, more distance and added short-game control.

**Key Technology in e-Series:**

- Pentagonal "WEB Dimple" technology creates a "spidering" pattern that provides 10 percent more dimple surface coverage than the previous e-Series. It all adds up to greater stability, more accuracy and longer distance.

**Key Technology in e5:**

- 2-piece construction with a urethane cover for more lift and carry, helping players who need a hand launching it higher.

**Bottom Line:**

Solid short-game performance with a high trajectory.



### Bridgestone e6

\$29/dozen

**It's for:** Players who want to reduce hooks and slices and gain a soft feel around the greens.

**Key Technologies:**

- Pentagonal "WEB Dimple" technology with "spidering" pattern.
- 3-piece ball with a soft Surlyn cover for enhanced feel and a mantle layer that minimizes sidespin.
- Available in white, yellow or orange.

**Bottom Line:** Engineered for aspirational players who'd like to hit straighter shots.



### Bridgestone e7

\$29/dozen

**It's for:** Players who hit the ball high and want more distance without ballooning shots.

**Key Technologies:**

- Pentagonal "WEB Dimple" technology with "spidering" pattern.
- A spin-reducing inner layer and firmer Surlyn cover boost ball speed.

**Bottom Line:** Aimed at players looking to max out distance.



### Callaway Chrome Soft

\$38/dozen

**It's for:** Players who want soft feel, low spin on full shots and Tour-like greenside performance.

**Key Technologies:**

- 3-piece ball with a low, 65-compression core creates an extremely soft feel while limiting spin rates on longer shots.
- Tour-caliber urethane cover for short-game spin and control.
- Firm intermediate layer recovers energy that's normally lost at impact in soft-core balls.

- Aerodynamic HEX (hexagonal) dimples reduce drag and increase lift.

**Bottom Line:** Soft feel and Tour-like spin on scoring shots, plus low spin with the big clubs.



### Callaway Superhot

\$27/dozen

**It's for:** Players who want max distance with reduced sidespin.

**Key Technologies:**

- A high-velocity core and Trionomer cover combine to produce fast ball speeds.
- HEX aerodynamics reduces drag for more lift.
- Soft inner layer and cover decrease spin to mitigate hooks and slices.

**Bottom Line:** The Superhot is built to go high, far and straight.



### Callaway Supersoft

\$22/dozen

**It's for:** Price-conscious golfers seeking soft feel and straight distance.

**Key Technologies:**

- 2-piece ball with 35-compression core (lowest of any in Callaway's line) provides very soft feel.
- Low compression reduces spin and promotes straighter shots.

**Bottom Line:** Max distance with a supple feel at a wallet-friendly price.



## Nike RZN Black Volt

\$46/dozen

**It's for:** Players who want Tour performance.**Key Technologies in RZN Series:**

- Interlocking core design called "Speedlock," which creates a tighter bond between the core and mantle layer. That makes for a more efficient transfer of energy and faster ball speeds.
  - Light resin core shifts mass to the perimeter for a more stable flight.
  - Proprietary cover coating increases spin on short shots.
- Available in Volt (yellow) or white.**
- Bottom Line:** A Tour-caliber, 4-piece ball with firmer feel and less spin on full shots than RZN Platinum.



## Nike RZN White Volt

\$30/dozen

**It's for:** Players who want close to Tour performance at a lower price than RZN Platinum or RZN Black.**Key Technologies:**

- 3-piece ball with "Speedlock" core.
- Soft, lightweight resin core.
- Proprietary cover coating boosts spin.
- Available in Volt (yellow) or white.

**Bottom Line:** A soft-feeling model capable of fast ball speeds and enhanced short-game control.



## Nike PD Soft Volt

\$16/dozen

**It's for:** Price-conscious golfers with moderate clubhead speeds.**Key Technologies:**

- Low-compression core decreases spin for straighter flight.
- Soft ionomer cover enhances feel and control on scoring shots.
- Available in Volt (yellow) or white.

**Bottom Line:** Two-piece distance model for players looking for a soft feel.



## Nike PD Long

\$16/dozen

**It's for:** Price-conscious golfers with faster clubhead speeds.**Key Technologies:**

- High-velocity core for faster ball speeds.
- Responsive feel on iron and wedge shots.
- Penetrating flight for added roll.
- Available in white only.

**Bottom Line:** Two-piece model for players who want longer distance and a boring flight with the big clubs.



## Alternative Route

Consider adding an unsung brand to your bag

Most top-quality balls are widely available at pro shops and sporting goods stores. However, a few brands with limited distribution are a little harder to locate. Here are three "alternative" brands worth hunting down.

Launched in 2015, **Snell Golf** offers My Tour Ball (\$32; all prices are for one dozen), a multilayer model with a cast urethane cover for players who want Tour performance, and Get Sum (\$21), a two-piece model for max distance and a straight flight. Chief designer Dean Snell has 25 years in the industry, including involvement with the creation of the original



Titleist Pro V1, plus TaylorMade's Penta, Tour Preferred, and Project (a) balls. Order through [snellgolf.com](http://snellgolf.com).

**Nicklaus Golf** tries to simplify the buying process with its Black (\$32), Blue (\$28) and White (\$28) balls. Select your ball based on the tees you'd normally play—black for back tees, blue for middle, and white for forward. By varying the core compression and cover material, each model is engineered for particular swing-speed ranges. Every purchase offers the option of a charitable contribution to the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation. Available at [nicklaus.com](http://nicklaus.com) or in pro shops at Nicklaus-designed courses.

Dick's Sporting Goods and Golf Galaxy are the only retail chains that sell **Maxfli's** U/6 Tour X, U/6 Tour, and U/6 Tour Soft (\$45 each). Each has a six-piece construction with a urethane cover, while different core compressions are for fast (Tour X), medium (Tour) or slow (Tour Soft) swing speeds. Other new models include the Revolution Distance and Revolution Control (\$16) and the SoftFli (\$20). Buy in-store or at [dickssportinggoods.com](http://dickssportinggoods.com) or [golfgalaxy.com](http://golfgalaxy.com).

### Srixon Z-Star

\$45/dozen

**It's for:** 90 to 105 mph swingers.

**Key Technologies in Z-Star Series:**

- "Gradient" core—softest in center, hardest on outside—for soft feel and low spin on full shots.
- Updated "SpinSkin" cover coating increases friction by 18 percent over the previous models for more spin.
- Cover is 21 percent softer than before.
- "Speed Dimple" pattern provides additional surface coverage for a more stable flight.

**Bottom Line:** Tour-quality performance with softer feel and more spin on full shots than the Z-Star XV.



### Srixon Z-Star XV

\$45/dozen

**It's for:** 100+ mph swingers.

**Key Technologies:**

- 4-piece ball with dual-core gradient design.
- "SpinSkin" cover coating.
- Softer cover than the previous Z-Star XV.
- Speed Dimple pattern.

**Bottom Line:** Tour-quality performance combines with a firmer feel and less spin on full shots than the Z-Star.



### Srixon Soft Feel

\$20/dozen

**It's for:** A soft feeling distance model for all swing speeds.

**Key Technologies:**

- 71-compression core for soft feel and low spin.
- Dimple pattern is designed to increase carry and stabilize flight.
- Available in white or yellow.
- "Hit Straight" alignment arrow promotes square set up on putts.

**Bottom Line:** Players who want better feel and a straighter ball flight at a value price.



### Srixon Soft Feel Lady

\$20/dozen

**It's for:** 50 to 70 mph swingers.

**Key Technologies:**

- 71-compression core generates soft feel and added distance for slower swingers.
- Dimple design built for more lift and carry.
- Available in white or pink.
- "Hit Straight" alignment arrow.

**Bottom Line:** Designed for players (typically, women) with slow swing speeds who need more lift and distance.



### TaylorMade AeroBurner Soft

\$20/dozen

**It's for:** Players looking for max distance with a soft feel.

**Key Technologies in AeroBurner Series:**

- High-energy core for added distance.
- LDP (low-drag performance) dimple pattern increases lift and limits drag to maximize carry.
- Proprietary lothane cover feels soft and increases touch around the greens.

**Bottom Line:** A soft feeling, two-piece distance ball for those on a budget.



### TaylorMade AeroBurner Pro

\$27/dozen

**It's for:** Players looking to bomb it off the tee, with spin control around the greens.

**Key Technologies:**

- High-energy core.
- LDP dimple pattern.
- Mantle layer and soft lothane cover combine to enhance spin on short-game shots.

**Bottom Line:** Aspiring players who want distance with added short-game control at a friendly price.



## Titleist Pro V1

\$48/dozen



**It's for:** Players who want Tour performance.

**Key Technologies:**

- New, softer thermoset urethane elastomer cover for softer feel and more spin on wedge shots than 2013 Pro V1.
- Spherically-tiled

dimple pattern for a stable, penetrating flight. Descent angle is shallower than Pro V1x.

- Soft compression core provides more long-game spin than Pro V1x.

**Bottom Line:** The standard in Tour balls just got better. The softest-feeling Pro V1 ever spins more on long shots and feels softer than Pro V1x.



## Titleist Pro V1x

\$48/dozen



**It's for:** Players who want Tour performance.

**Key Technologies:**

- New, softer thermoset urethane elastomer cover makes for a softer feel and more spin on wedge shots than 2013 Pro V1x.

- Spherically-tiled dimple design for a stable flight. Descent angle is steeper than Pro V1.
- 4-piece ball with dual core, which contributes to less long-game spin than Pro V1.

**Bottom Line:** The softest-feeling Pro V1x to date spins less on long shots and feels slightly firmer than the Pro V1.



## Volvik White Color S4

\$45/dozen



**It's for:** 90 to 120 mph swingers.

**Key Technologies:**

- 4-piece ball with 105 compression core.
- Durable urethane bismuth double cover increases spin.
- White paint job with pearlescent blue improves visibility.

**Bottom Line:** Tour performance for faster swingers who prefer a firmer feel and lower spin than the S3 ball.



## Volvik Crystal Blue

\$30/dozen

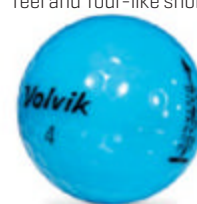


**It's for:** 60 to 90 mph swingers.

**Key Technologies:**

- 80-compression core for soft feel and lower spin with longer clubs.
- Soft Surlyn cover improves feel and greenside performance.
- 350-dimple pattern.

**Bottom Line:** A 3-piece ball for slower swingers who want feathery feel and Tour-like short-game control.



## Wilson Staff Duo

\$20/dozen

**It's for:** Aspiring players.

**Key Technologies:**

- 2-piece ball with an extremely soft 29-compression core—25 percent softer than in the previous Duo.
- Ionomer cover and 302-dimple pattern provide lift and consistent flight.
- Available in white or yellow.

**Bottom Line:** Expect distance and soft feel at an entry-level price.



## Wilson Staff Duo Spin

\$27/dozen

**It's for:** Aspiring players.

**Key Technologies:**

- 3-piece ball with soft, 35-compression core designed to produce low spin off the driver.
- Core produces fast rebound for more length with the big clubs.
- Mantle layer helps to increase spin with mid-irons and short irons.

**Bottom Line:** It offers more short-game spin than the standard Duo and is nearly as soft.



# BEST TRIPS

SPEND YOUR  
MONEY WELL

*Edited by Joe Passov*

*Photograph courtesy  
of Wickenburg Ranch  
Golf & Social Club*



WORTH YOUR MONEY THIS MONTH

## Golden Prospects

Eureka! With Wickenburg Ranch, an old Arizona mining town yields a brilliant new course—at a hard-to-beat price

### **Wickenburg Ranch**

Wickenburg, Ariz.

7,059 yards, par 71; green fees: \$95

480-367-3610, [wickenburgranch.com](http://wickenburgranch.com)



**If you like gorgeous terrain  
and great golf, you'll strike it  
rich at Wickenburg Ranch.**

**T**here's gold in them thar hills! Well, there used to be. The town of Wickenburg, located an hour and 15 minutes northwest of downtown Phoenix, sprang to life in the 1860s from a patchwork of settlements that had accompanied a local gold rush. In 1863, a Prussian prospector named Henry Wickenburg discovered the Vulture Mine, 12 miles southwest of the city that now bears his name, and over the next 79 years it yielded more than \$30 million worth of precious ore. Today, gold mining and dude ranches have given way

to a brilliant new golf course, Wickenburg Ranch. And after soaking in the views and putting on these greens, we've come to a conclusion: All that glitters is green.

Wickenburg Ranch Golf & Social Club was hewn from the rolling, rugged high desert terrain by two amateur architects, Wendell Pickett and William Brownlee. The two designers didn't ace every test, but overall, they get an A for effort. Memorable holes arrive early and often, reaching a climax at 13 and 14. The former is a vertigo-inducing, 246-yard par 3 that plunges seven stories to a green framed by a vast lake to the right and

mountain panoramas in the distance. The 595-yard 14th also sports water and desert peril, as well as views of Vulture Peak. Home to a new Trilogy residential development by Shea Homes, Wickenburg Ranch will eventually go private. For now, the public gets a bargain green fee and temperatures that are usually 10 to 20 degrees cooler than they are in Phoenix. Wickenburg Ranch was actually grassed and ready to go in 2008 when the recession put the project on hold. But club management clearly learned a lesson from Wickenburg's early prospectors—persistence pays off.

# Ask Travelin' Joe

HE'S BEEN WHERE YOU'RE GOING



HAVE A QUESTION FOR TRAVELIN' JOE? TWEET HIM @JOEPASSOV, OR POST YOUR QUESTION ON THE GOLF MAGAZINE/GOLF.COM FACEBOOK PAGE.



The scenic 16th is one of the Gold's four fantastic par 3s.

LARRY LAMBERCHT

**Dear Joe,**

**We're taking a buddies/family trip to Williamsburg, Va. The guys get two rounds, and then we do the dad thing the rest of the time. What are your must-plays?**

—Todd Traynor, Philadelphia, Pa.

**Golden Horseshoe's Gold Course** (\$79-\$175; 757-220-7696, [colonialwilliamsburg.com](http://colonialwilliamsburg.com)) remains my favorite. A 1963 creation from Robert Trent Jones Sr., the topsy-turvy terrain yields one of golf's best par-3 quartets. The downhill 16th, its banana-shaped green jutting out into a lake, is unforgettable. Next up is **Kingsmill's River Course** (\$90-\$165; 800-832-5665, [kingsmill.com](http://kingsmill.com)), an early Pete Dye masterwork. The superb closing trio of holes is

highlighted by the par-3 17th, which soars above the James River. A stay at Kingsmill is required to play there. Avoid the back tees—or any tees—at **Royal New Kent** (\$39-\$99; 804-966-7023, [royalnewkent.com](http://royalnewkent.com)), unless you're a serious stick. This 1997 Mike Strantz design is awesome, but harsh if your shots stray. And if the kids want to play, do **Golden Horseshoe's 9-hole Spotswood** (\$39; 757-220-7696, [colonialwilliamsburg.com](http://colonialwilliamsburg.com)). It's in the backyard of the Williamsburg Inn and is steps away from Colonial Williamsburg's attractions.

**Hi Joe,**

**I'm planning an annual golf trip to Myrtle Beach, and this time I wanted your take. Any courses**

**that my playing partners and I simply can't overlook?**

—Tom Deegan, Hartford, Conn.

Start with **Tidewater** (\$115-185; 843-466-8754, [tidewatergolf.com](http://tidewatergolf.com)), which boasts the region's best blend of beauty and beastliness. The low-profile, forested holes—which skirt salt marshes, the Intracoastal and the Cherry Grove Inlet—have always been standouts. In the past, conditions could be iffy, but in October 2014, Tidewater reopened with tweaks by architect Kris Spence, including new greens, expanded fairway landing areas and new bunker sand. There was also selective tree removal that has opened up scenic vistas. Tidewater is a trophy track once again. Often

overlooked is the 55-year-old **Surf Golf & Beach Club** (\$85-\$125; 843-249-1524, [surfclub.com](http://surfclub.com)), probably because it seesaws between semiprivate and fully private. It's currently back to some public access before 9:30 a.m. and after 1:30 p.m. daily. By all means, give it a go—it has a great clubhouse and strong par 3s. One more tip: If you haven't played **the Dunes Club** (\$75-\$225; 843-449-5236, [thedunesclub.net](http://thedunesclub.net)), it's a must. Some Rees Jones tinkering and new grasses have this RTJ Sr. classic playing better than ever. When you're ready to put down the clubs and pick up a fork, head to **New York Prime** (843-448-8081, [newyorkprime.com](http://newyorkprime.com)), my very favorite steakhouse in all of the South.





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# 10 Most Influential Designs You Can Play

If you admire inspired course architecture but don't have access to private clubs, there's still hope. Here are the 10 most influential designs you can play.

**St. Andrews (Old Course), St. Andrews, Scotland; Nature, 1400s; \$118-\$251, [standrews.com](http://standrews.com)**

The birthplace of golf features multiple blind bunkers, huge double greens and strategic options that vary by the day. The emphasis on variety and strategy became the foundation for all great designs in years to come, including Augusta National.

**Muirfield, Gullane, Scotland; Old Tom Morris, 1889/ H.S. Colt, 1925; \$162-\$310, [muirfield.org.uk](http://muirfield.org.uk)**

Though visitors can only play Tuesdays and Thursdays, the 16-time British Open venue is absolutely worth the effort. Tom Weiskopf cites the primary appeal: "The continuous change in direction from hole to hole leads to different winds, great balance and maximum variety."

**Pinehurst (No. 2), Pinehurst, N.C.; Donald Ross, 1907; \$370-\$450, [pinehurst.com](http://pinehurst.com)**

Donald Ross's subtle, sublime masterpiece rolls gently and spaciouly through tall pines, with a layout that emphasizes placement and angle of attack. That's because the inverted-saucer greens will only accept certain approaches. After that, No. 2 becomes one of golf's fiercest chipping tests.

**Pebble Beach, Pebble Beach, Calif.; Jack Neville/Douglas Grant, 1919; \$495-\$530, [pebblebeach.com](http://pebblebeach.com)**

The first great American public seaside course, Pebble benefited from an ingenious figure-8 design that brought the player right to the ocean's edge, then into the woods, then back again. The pacing of the holes, the small greens and the heroic shots over the Pacific were revolutionary for their time.

**Bethpage State Park (Black), Farmingdale, N.Y.; A.W. Tillinghast, 1936; \$78-\$150, [nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com)**

To give the public their own U.S. Open-worthy course, the State of New York commissioned A.W. Tillinghast to mold a layout that featured long, uphill par 4s, massive bunkers and wrist-fracturing rough. It remains a smackdown—and it's walking only.

**Dunes Golf & Beach Club, Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Robert Trent Jones Sr., 1948; \$75-\$225, [thedunesclub.net](http://thedunesclub.net)**

Post-World War II design gave rise to the aerial game and risk/reward architecture. No one epitomized that philosophy more than Robert Trent Jones Sr., whose trademarks included long, "runway" tees, extensive use of water hazards—such as the Dunes' par-5 13th—and elevated greens.

**Harbour Town Golf Links, Hilton Head Island, S.C.; Pete Dye, 1969; \$105-\$290, [seapines.com](http://seapines.com)**

As much as Robert Trent Jones changed the face of design, Pete Dye changed it again. Dye went smaller, with shorter courses and retro features such as pot bunkers and railroad ties. Toss in moss-draped oaks and

an iconic lighthouse, and you have Harbour Town.

**TPC Sawgrass (Players Stadium), Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; Pete Dye, 1980; \$300-\$495, [tpc.com/sawgrass](http://tpc.com/sawgrass)**

TPC Sawgrass catapulted architecture onto the front page with its unparalleled mix of target and strategic golf, as well as trouble on every hole in the form of pot and waste bunkers, swales, severely undulating greens, stadium-like spectator mounds and water everywhere.

**Shadow Creek, North Las Vegas, Nev.; Tom Fazio/Steve Wynn, 1989; \$500, [shadowcreek.com](http://shadowcreek.com)**

Tom Fazio and Steve Wynn demonstrated that with enough money and imagination, anything's possible in golf course design. Hewn from flat, featureless desert, Shadow Creek emerged with hills, flowers, a forest of pines and a network of creeks and lakes.

**Bandon Dunes Golf Resort (Bandon Dunes), Bandon, Ore.; David McLay Kidd, 1999; \$75-\$310, [bandondunesgolf.com](http://bandondunesgolf.com)**

With Mike Keiser's vision, this is the course that put remote Bandon Dunes on the map. Draped atop Pacific Ocean bluffs, the firm, fast-running, links-like layout brought the entire Scottish experience—walking with caddies, ground game, wind—to America.



Elements of the Old Course are found in layouts all over the world.



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## AT YOUR SERVICE

# Sun Kings

After a down period of several years, Greater Phoenix is witnessing a mini-boom of course renovations and improvements. A handful of top private clubs in the Valley of Sun have undergone makeovers, from Paradise Valley Country Club (Bill Coore) to Desert Forest (former Coore associate Dave Zinkand) to Scottsdale National to the Country Club at DC Ranch. If you're looking for public-track upgrades, here are three of the top places to play.



Ak-Chin Southern Dunes winds through parkland, linksland and desert.

## 1. Ak-Chin Southern Dunes, Maricopa (\$29-\$189; 480-367-8949, [golfsoutherndunes.com](http://golfsoutherndunes.com))

Fred Couples and Schmidt-Curley's Brian Curley were on hand in early December 2014 to christen their renovated championship course and their brand-new short course, #miniDunes (yes, it's really spelled that way). Ranked No. 86 in our Top 100 U.S. Courses You Can Play, the 7,517-yard course is now more playable for average Joes—a sixth of the total sand was removed and extra turf was added where needed, especially to eliminate overly demanding forced carries. The six-hole #miniDunes (\$12 for unlimited play) welcomes all ages in the afternoon, after the practice range shuts down. Par 3s measuring 61 to 114 yards permit youngsters to hone their skills,

and two bunkers on five of the six holes will also challenge their sand prowess.

## 2. San Marcos Golf Resort, Chandler (\$45-\$79; 480-963-3358, [sanmarcosresort.com](http://sanmarcosresort.com))

Arizona's first grass resort golf course dates to 1913, when town founder Dr. Alexander Chandler opened the resort with a flock of ostriches on the grounds. After the course filed for bankruptcy in 2011, Interwest Capital emerged to save and enhance the venerable track. Although not quite as splashy as its earlier incarnation, the course has been lovingly restored to prominence. Connected to a Crowne Plaza hotel, the 6,640-yard San Marcos spread has retained its tree-lined, parkland character and features vastly improved conditioning.

## 3. TPC Scottsdale (Stadium), Scottsdale (\$73-\$299; 480-585-4334, [tpc.com/tpc-scottsdale](http://tpc.com/tpc-scottsdale))

The rowdy venue for the Waste Management Phoenix Open is now enjoying a renewed vitality thanks to a nip-and-tuck performed by original co-designer Tom Weiskopf. Four greens have been relocated: the second, third, fourth and especially the 14th, which has been elevated, benched into a hillside and fronted by bunkers. Fun, historical nods take place at the par-5 13th, where the left fairway was eliminated and a tiny, coffin-shaped bunker was added near the green, and at 18, where Weiskopf installed Oakmont-style church pew bunkers beyond the water on the left side.

DEAL  
OF THE  
MONTH

## La Quinta Resort & Club

La Quinta, Calif.

**Emerald-green fairways meet stark desert beauty at the sixth hole on La Quinta's Mountain course.**

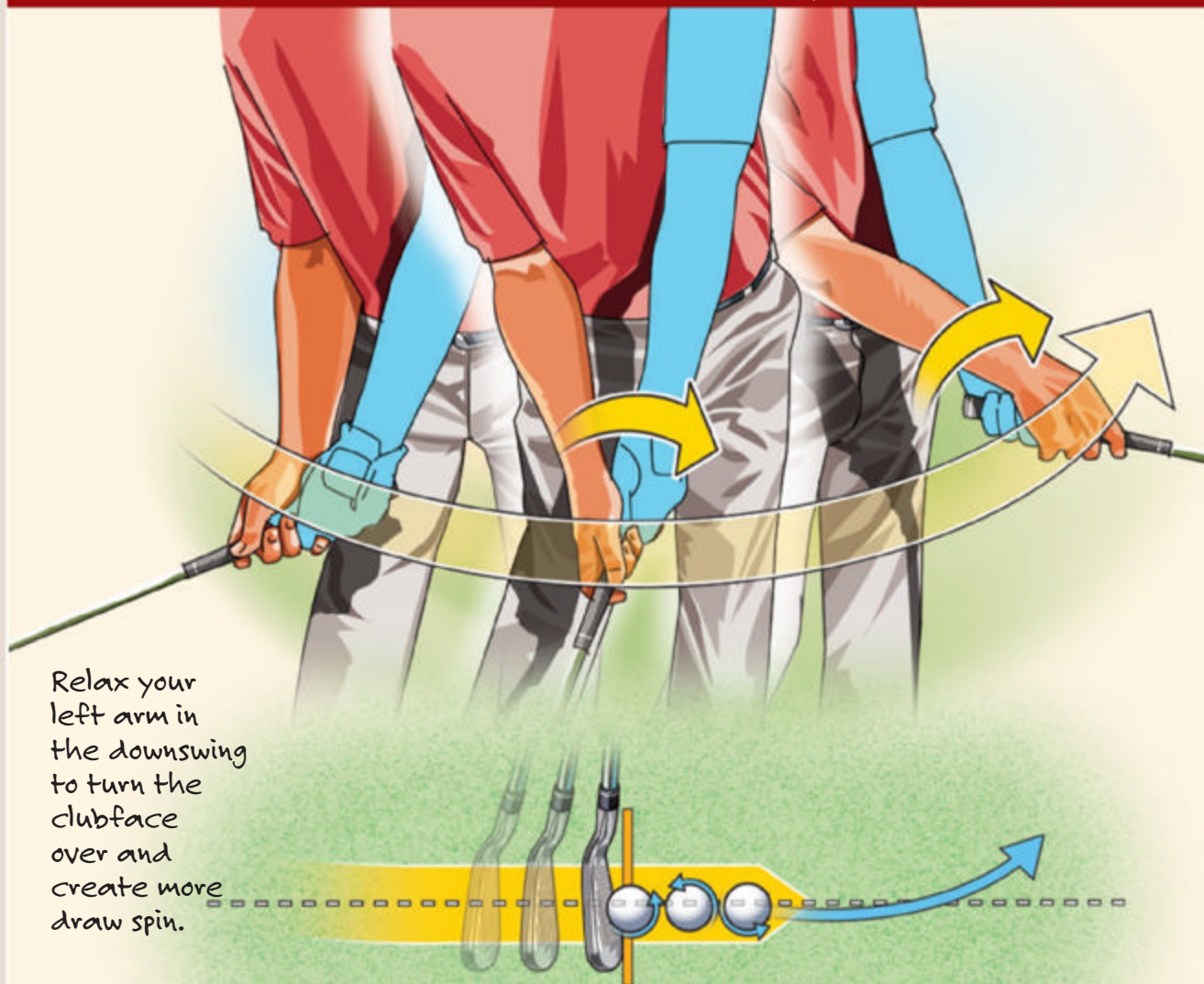


Located at the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains two hours east of Los Angeles, La Quinta opened its doors in 1926. Regular visitors included Clark Gable, Greta Garbo and *It's a Wonderful Life* director Frank Capra, who once said of the hotel, "It was a wonderful green oasis in the middle of the desert, and it was absolutely private." After a recent stay, I can attest that life at La Quinta is still wonderful. A multimillion-dollar restoration has refreshed the entire property, and guest rooms, landscaping and the pool experience have also received upgrades. Especially admirable are the Starlight Casitas patios; with handsome mountain views, new fireplaces and comfy sofas, it's tough to leave. Two of the resort's five excellent courses—PGA West (TPC Stadium) and La Quinta (Mountain)—are ranked in our Top 100 Courses You Can Play. To celebrate the renovated La Quinta, sign up for the Desert Links package. Included is lodging, unlimited golf, based on availability (\$50 surcharge for PGA West [TPC Stadium]) and a \$25 resort credit. May rates begin at \$369 per room, per night, based on double occupancy. 855-884-9315, [laquintaresort.com](http://laquintaresort.com)

# PRIVATE Lessons

MAY 2015

FOR MORE INSTRUCTION THAT FITS YOUR GAME, GO TO [GOLF.COM](http://GOLF.COM)



Relax your left arm in the downswing to turn the clubface over and create more draw spin.



## STRAIGHT HITTER

You keep the ball in play, but a lack of distance puts pressure on your game.

## How to Rip a Right-to-Left Shot

A draw can be very useful off the tee, especially if the hole doglegs from right to left or the wind is blowing from left to right. A draw will also roll out farther than a fade or a straight shot, which makes it an attractive choice on long par 5s. So how do you dial up a draw on command?

Start by aligning your body slightly right of the target. Keep the clubface pointed at the target, then relax your left arm to encourage

more forearm and clubface rotation. On the downswing, feel as though your left arm is stalling as the clubhead approaches the ball. This will let your right arm and the shaft play catch-up; the toe of the clubhead will pass the heel, turning the face over and promoting right-to-left spin. You can also strengthen your left-hand grip, but to really turn the clubface over, focus on relaxing and slowing down your left arm.



### SENIOR PLAYER

You have lost some flexibility and power, but you can still play well.

## Make Your Hybrids Sizzle Off the Tee

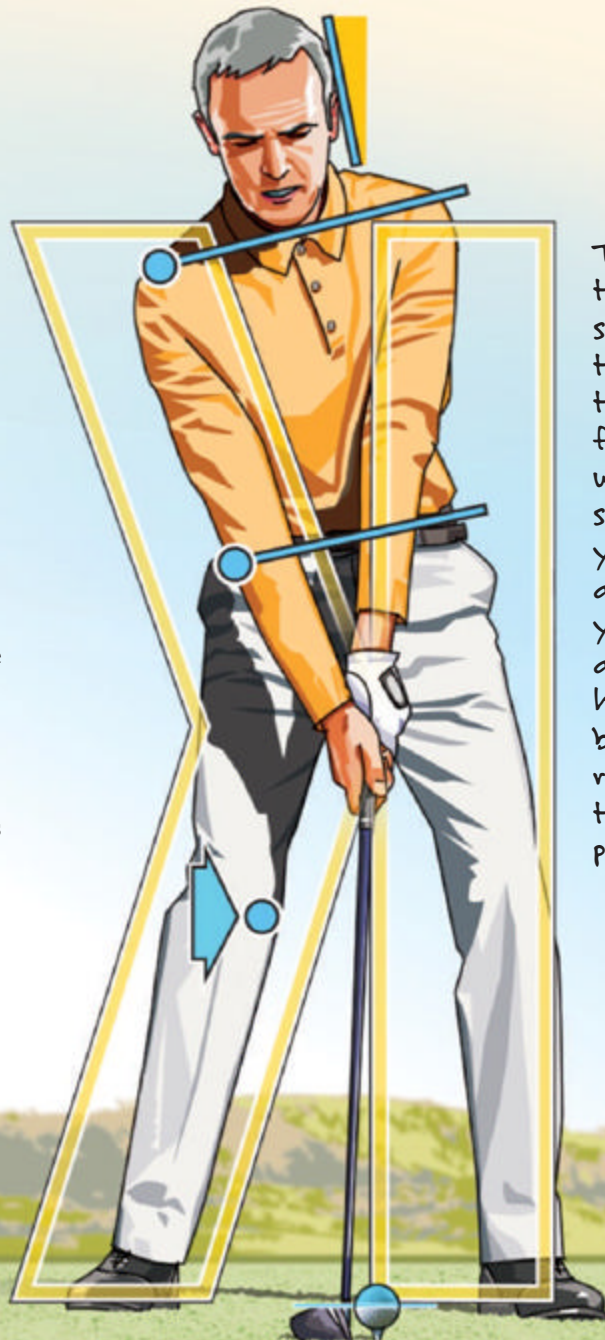
A hybrid is a great choice off the tee on short par 4s (when the 150-yard marker is well within your reach) and on long par 3s. This is because its lower, deeper center of gravity helps you bring the ball in higher and softer than a 3- or 4-iron can. It's also a good option on par 5s, since you're more likely to put the ball in the fairway with a hybrid than you are with a driver. Two solid hybrid shots should

leave you with less than 50 yards into the green on most par 5s, creating an excellent birdie opportunity.

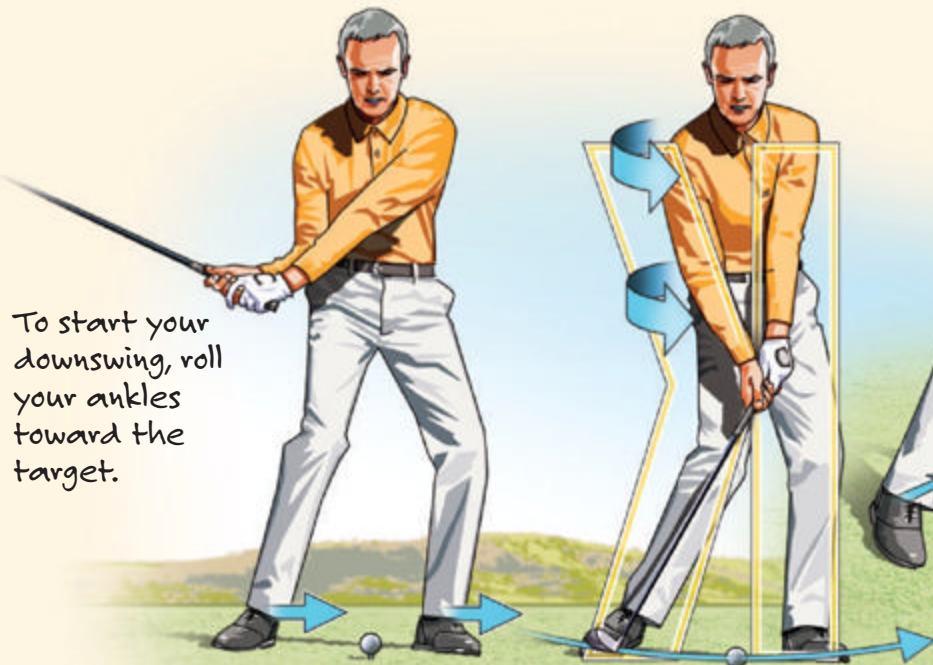
For more distance, choose your lowest-lofted hybrid. If you seek more height and control off the tee, opt for your highest-lofted hybrid. To get the best results with any hybrid you choose off the tee, follow these simple keys.

### SETUP: FORM A "REVERSE K"

Tee the ball high enough so that half of it crests above the topline of the clubhead. Position the ball ahead of center in your stance, as you would with a fairway wood, and set your feet about shoulder-width apart (measured from the inside of your heels). Dip your right shoulder and right hip, which will angle your spine away from the target, and tilt your head behind the ball. Your body should appear to form a "reverse K," with your right knee tilted in and your right shoulder several inches lower than your left. This setup helps you hit slightly up on the ball to powerfully sweep it off the tee.



The "Reverse K" is the perfect way to set up for a hybrid tee shot. Play the ball slightly forward, aligned with your left shoulder, and bend your right knee in a bit, which lowers your right shoulder and settles your head behind the ball. Now you're ready to attack the ball from the proper angle!

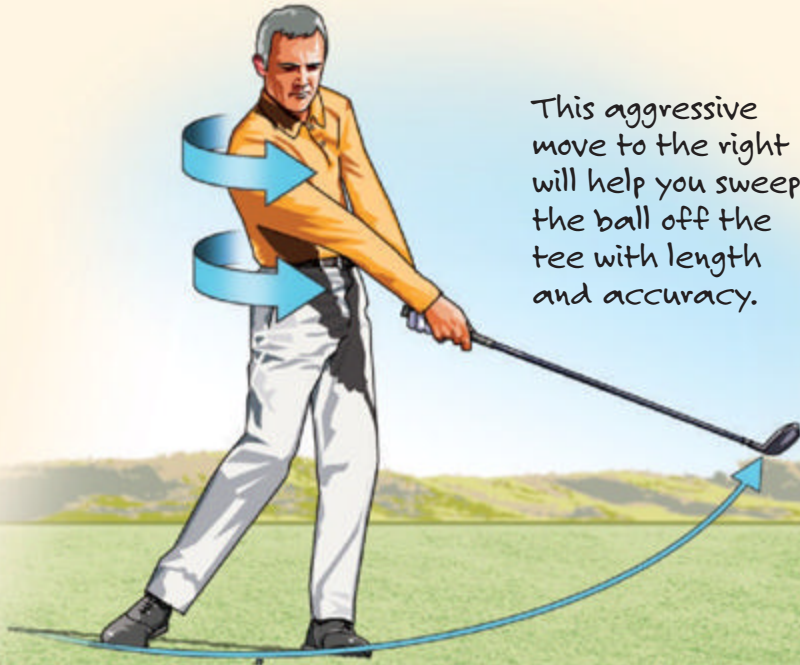


To start your downswing, roll your ankles toward the target.

Once your weight shifts to your left leg, drive your right side toward the target.

### SWING: ROLL YOUR ANKLES

It's imperative to maintain the reverse K through impact—this encourages a solid, upward strike. To keep the tilt intact, start your downswing by slightly rolling both ankles toward the target. This not only transfers your weight forward, it keeps your head behind the ball so you can sweep the ball off the tee. The ankle roll also activates your legs, helping you generate more power. After you roll your ankles, rotate through the ball with your right side, turning your right shoulder and hip toward the target. Follow this sequence—rolling your ankles, then aggressively releasing your right side—to launch it long and straight with every hybrid in your bag.



This aggressive move to the right will help you sweep the ball off the tee with length and accuracy.



### POWER HITTER

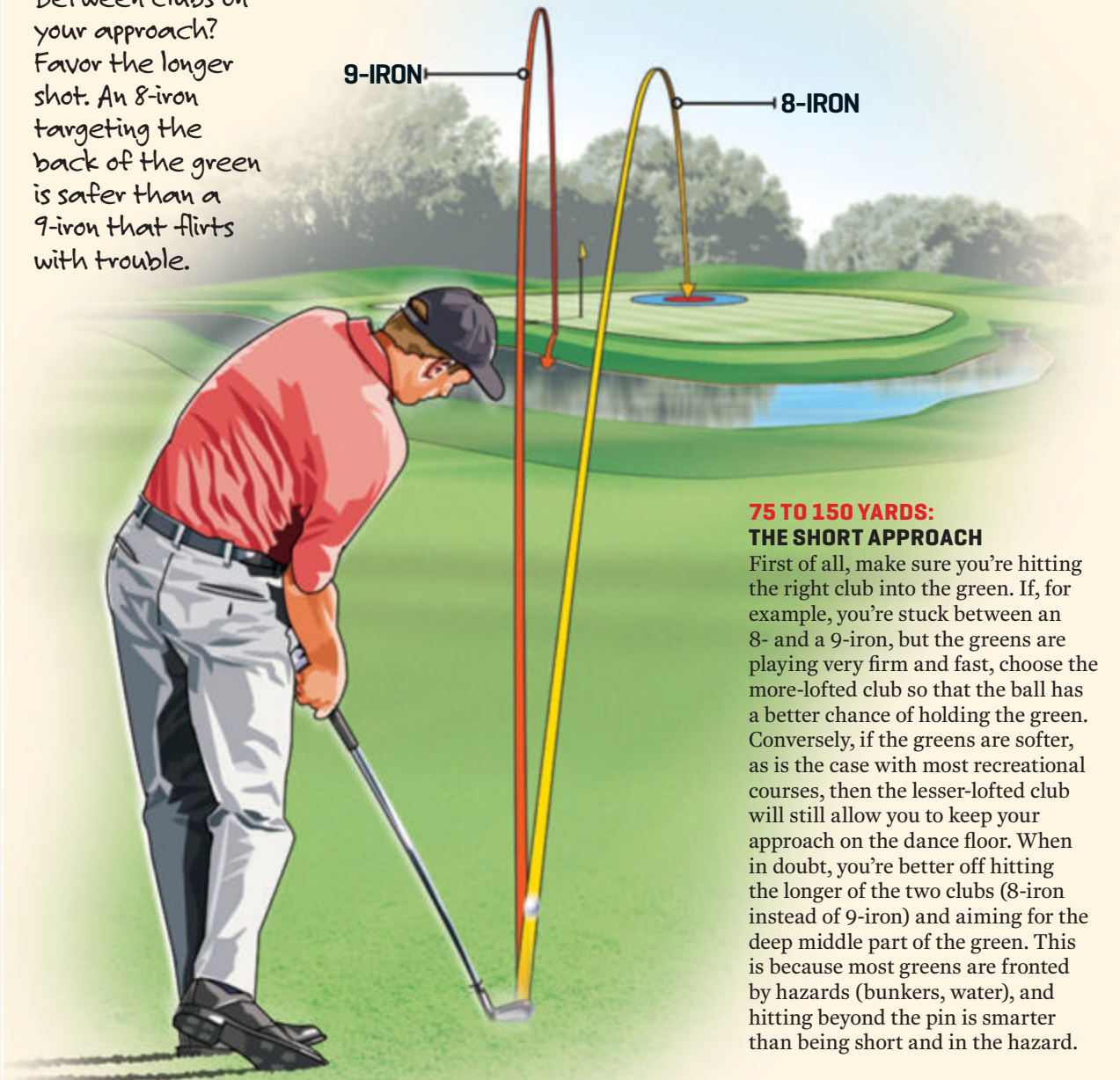
You hit the ball a long way, but your game needs control and consistency.

## The Foolproof Way to Hit More Greens

Your length off the tee makes you the envy of your foursome, and accuracy isn't an issue for you. But when you add up the scores at the end of the round, you're not going as low as you think you should. A likely reason? Your iron play. If you consistently miss the green from 75 to 150 yards and from 150 to

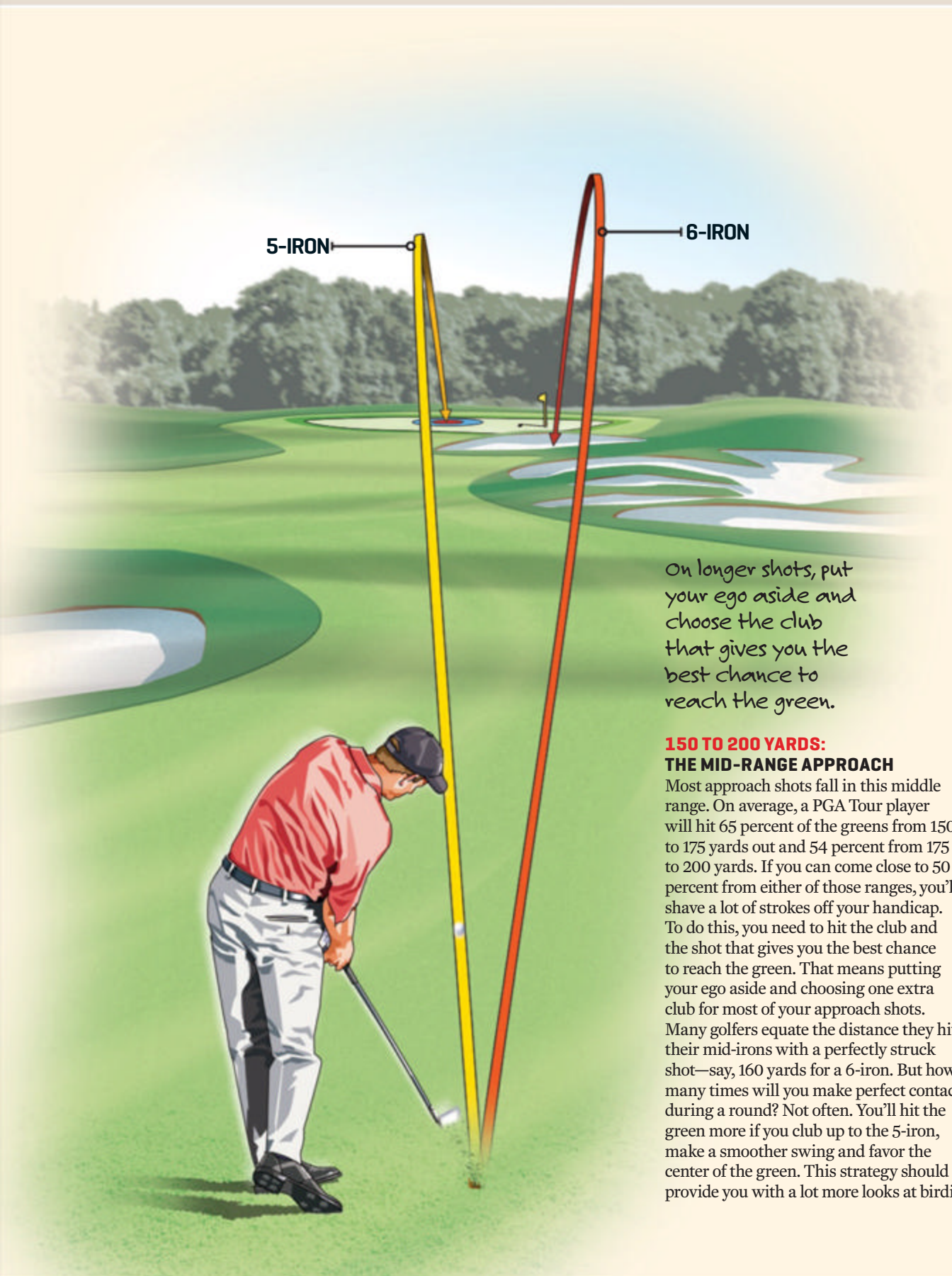
200 yards, and you constantly put yourself in sticky situations around the green, it doesn't matter how long and straight you are—you'll struggle to score. Here are some keys to help you take advantage of a big drive with an accurate approach from short and mid-range.

Between clubs on your approach? Favor the longer shot. An 8-iron targeting the back of the green is safer than a 9-iron that flirts with trouble.



### 75 TO 150 YARDS: THE SHORT APPROACH

First of all, make sure you're hitting the right club into the green. If, for example, you're stuck between an 8- and a 9-iron, but the greens are playing very firm and fast, choose the more-lofted club so that the ball has a better chance of holding the green. Conversely, if the greens are softer, as is the case with most recreational courses, then the lesser-lofted club will still allow you to keep your approach on the dance floor. When in doubt, you're better off hitting the longer of the two clubs (8-iron instead of 9-iron) and aiming for the deep middle part of the green. This is because most greens are fronted by hazards (bunkers, water), and hitting beyond the pin is smarter than being short and in the hazard.



On longer shots, put your ego aside and choose the club that gives you the best chance to reach the green.

**150 TO 200 YARDS:  
THE MID-RANGE APPROACH**

Most approach shots fall in this middle range. On average, a PGA Tour player will hit 65 percent of the greens from 150 to 175 yards out and 54 percent from 175 to 200 yards. If you can come close to 50 percent from either of those ranges, you'll shave a lot of strokes off your handicap. To do this, you need to hit the club and the shot that gives you the best chance to reach the green. That means putting your ego aside and choosing one extra club for most of your approach shots. Many golfers equate the distance they hit their mid-irons with a perfectly struck shot—say, 160 yards for a 6-iron. But how many times will you make perfect contact during a round? Not often. You'll hit the green more if you club up to the 5-iron, make a smoother swing and favor the center of the green. This strategy should provide you with a lot more looks at birdie.



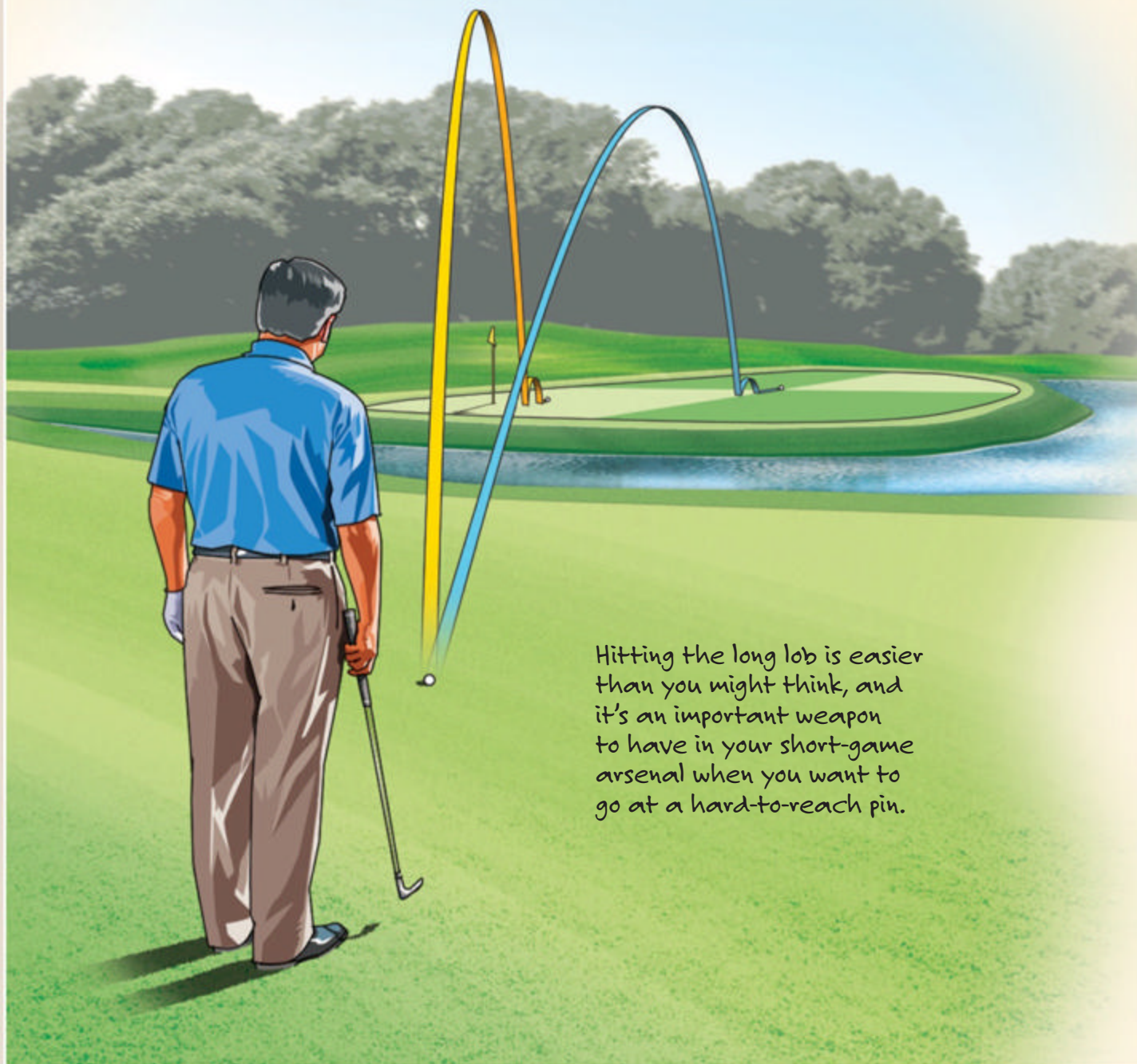
### LOW HANDICAPPER

You play well but want to shave those last few strokes off your handicap.

## Master the Go-For-Broke Lob Shot

Your approach shot leaves you 60 yards from the hole—an awkward distance. What's more, the pin is seemingly inaccessible, tucked on the far-left quadrant of the green, just a few paces from a hazard. Now you have a decision to make. Sure, you can play it safe and hit your next shot to the fat of the green

and two-putt for your stress-free par. But if you're playing well and trying to post a low score, firing at the flag is not as risky as it sounds. It's time to hit the long lob shot, which combines safety and precision and lets you be aggressive when you're swinging well. Here's how to lob it tight every time.



Hitting the long lob is easier than you might think, and it's an important weapon to have in your short-game arsenal when you want to go at a hard-to-reach pin.

### SETUP: CREATE MORE LOFT

Choose your most lofted wedge and position the ball in the middle of your stance. Target the top of the flagstick, diverting your eyes away from the hazard and any other lurking trouble. Open the clubface a few degrees and rotate your stance to the left, keeping the clubhead's leading edge square to your target. This will let you make your normal, full lob wedge motion, rather than forcing you to take something off your swing. It also helps to rotate your hands to the left on the grip, creating a weaker position that keeps you from closing down the face through impact and losing valuable loft.



For maximum loft, slightly open both your clubface and your stance, then rotate your hands to the left to keep the clubface from closing down through impact.

### SWING: STAY AGGRESSIVE

Make your standard pitch swing, being careful not to overswing—there's no need for a huge backswing from a short distance. Rotate your torso aggressively through impact, and unwind your body as your arms swing down the target line. Don't try to finesse or “help” the ball into the air. Swing with the same tempo as you would with a long iron, letting the loft do the work for you.



On the downswing, aggressively turn your torso through impact, which will keep you from trying to “help” the ball into the air.



### HIGH HANDICAPPER

You have potential but must solve some fundamental problems.

## Stay Steady to Stop Pulling Putts

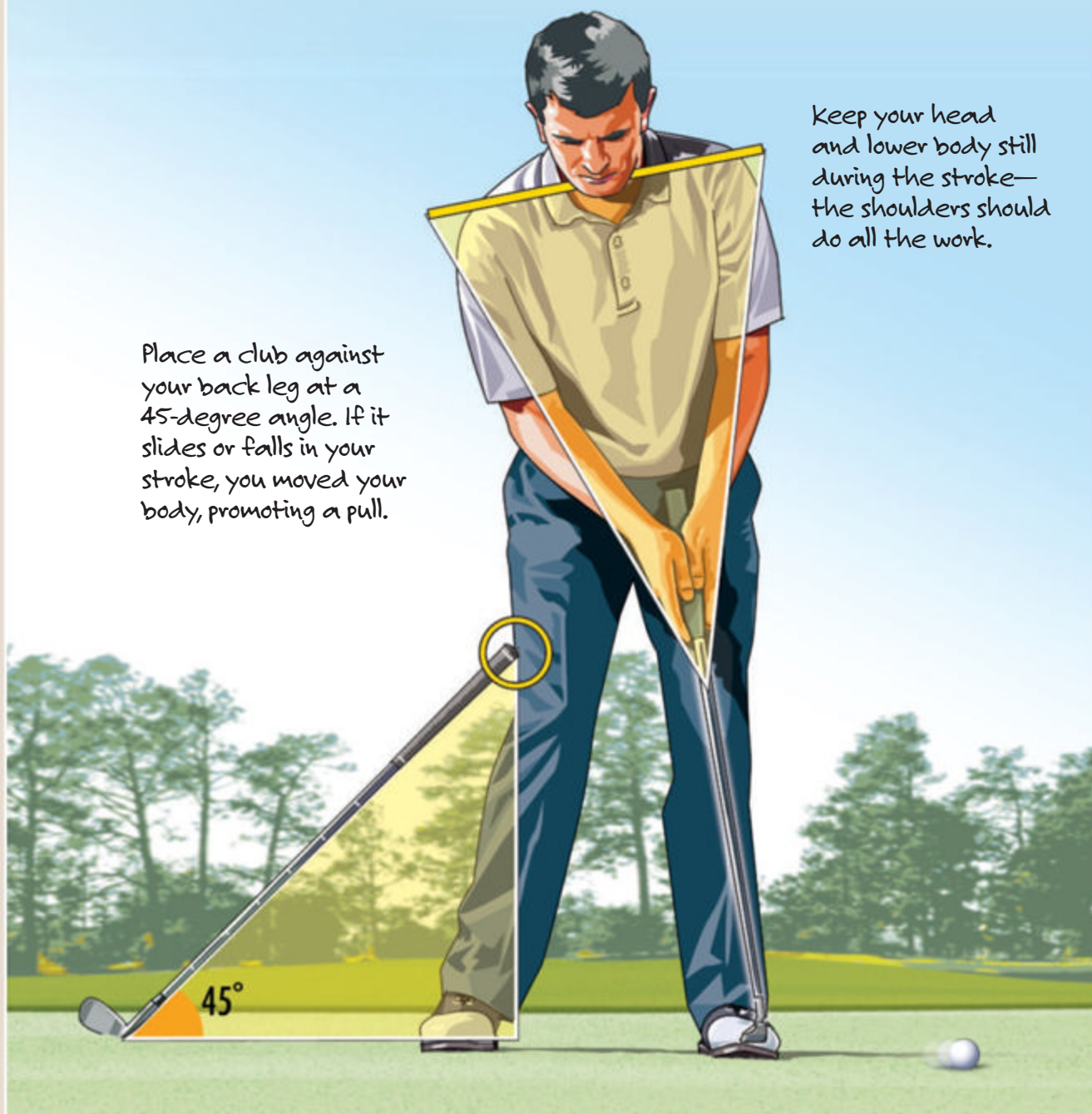
If you pull a lot of makeable putts (12-footers or less), you're probably moving something besides your shoulders during the stroke. For most high-handicappers, the culprit is usually the legs. You tend to turn your body to the target too early in an effort to get a peek at your roll, which causes your putterhead to move on an out-to-in path.

The following drill will keep you from opening up your body too soon. Take your

normal putting stance and anchor the grip of a wedge at a 45-degree angle against the outside of your right thigh. Then make your stroke. If you turn your body, you'll feel the grip slide down your pant leg, or even fall to the ground. Try to keep your body completely still below the waist and above the neck, using your shoulders to power the stroke. This will steady your stroke and help you knock it into the heart of the cup.

Place a club against your back leg at a 45-degree angle. If it slides or falls in your stroke, you moved your body, promoting a pull.

Keep your head and lower body still during the stroke—the shoulders should do all the work.





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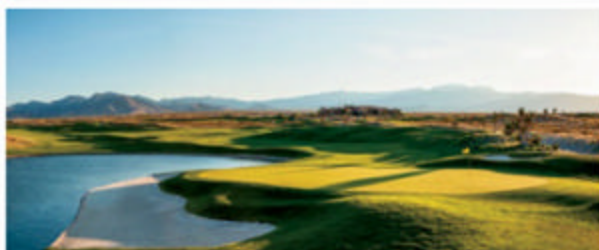
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# The Wright Way

**T**HEY SAY BAD NEWS comes in threes. Earlier this year, and in quick succession, golf lost Charlie Sifford, Billy Casper and Rhonda Glenn.

Mickey Wright, the Nicklaus of women's golf, admired all three. She grew up in San Diego with Billy Casper, who played golf in a T-shirt and with a wedge capable of magic tricks. From a distance she observed Charlie Sifford, the pioneering black golfer "who always seemed somewhat angry, and I could understand why," Mickey told me recently. The man played through a haze of hate.

And then there was her friend Rhonda Glenn, a USGA historian who wrote a sentence about Mickey that should outlive us all: "She viewed golf as a form of self-expression rather than a contest between two people."

At last year's Masters, Rhonda was honored by the Golf Writers Association of America for her many contributions to the game. Mickey was thrilled for Rhonda. They met in 1966, when Mickey was an LPGA icon and Rhonda was a 19-year-old South Florida amateur golfer and junior-college student. Mickey watched her grow up. "Who would ever have thought she'd be gone 10 months later?" Mickey asked.

Last June, at Pinehurst, Rhonda organized a dinner for former winners of the U.S. Women's Open. (Mickey won four between 1958 and 1964 but didn't attend the dinner.) In February, a doctor told Rhonda she had pancreatic cancer. Four days later she was dead. She was 68.

Mickey turned 80 on Valentine's Day. "It doesn't feel a whole lot different from 79," she said. She hasn't played in years, but when she's in the mood she hits wedge shots off a mat from her modest backyard in Port St. Lucie, Fla., onto a fairway of a neighboring resort course. She watches golf on TV with the volume off. The announcers clutter up the swings she wants to observe for herself.

**Nearly 50 years after sweet-swinging Mickey Wright won the last of her 13 major championships, she still heeds the lessons golf has taught her.**



Mickey likes the famous Thoreau line from *Walden*: "Simplify, simplify." In her locker display at the World Golf Hall of Fame, there is just one artifact, her instruction book, *Play Golf the Wright Way*. She gave lessons to a lone student, Gertie White, who until recently lived across the fairway from Mickey and her partner, the former LPGA player Peggy Wilson. "I took a 150-shooter and made her a 90-shooter," Mickey said of Gertie. She emphasized two things: Make a full turn, and feel like you're swinging toward your target. You won't—you can't—but that's what it should feel like.

"Gertie has made all of my clothes for the last 20 years," Mickey said. "She is a master dressmaker and seamstress from Munich. We traded off, and I got, by far, the best of the deal." Yes, home-sewn clothes.

The rush of modern golf and modern life—all that tweeting and analyzing,

all those wedges—leaves Mickey cold.

"What do you think about Tiger's chipping problem?" I asked Mickey.

"Is that his problem?" she said.

Golf taught her life. If Mickey had a mantra, it'd be *one shot, and day, at a time*. "If I have an appointment to see my breast cancer doctor, I don't start thinking about it three days before," she said. "I think about it that morning."

She likes the young players in the women's game. Lydia Ko! Playing the world, making millions, winning—and just a teenager. But Mickey wouldn't trade places with Lydia for all the money in Dubai.

"I'm happy with where I am," Mickey said. "I'm glad I played in my time." On her 80th birthday, she hit two wedge shots off the mat, liked them, moved on. It was a gap wedge, sent to her by Wilson. "I never had a wedge with a G on it before."

She's grateful for things large and small. When she joined the tour, the LPGA started playing longer courses, from the men's tees, so the ladies wouldn't leave town with so many course records. That move was a gift to Mickey. The game's best players—Hogan, Big Jack, Woods—have always thrived in tough conditions. Hogan once said of Mickey, "She had the finest swing I ever saw, man or woman." He said that to Rhonda.

Mickey's father was a lawyer, an athlete, a gambler, a man-about-town. He took Mickey to prize fights and quickly deduced that his daughter was independently owned and operated.

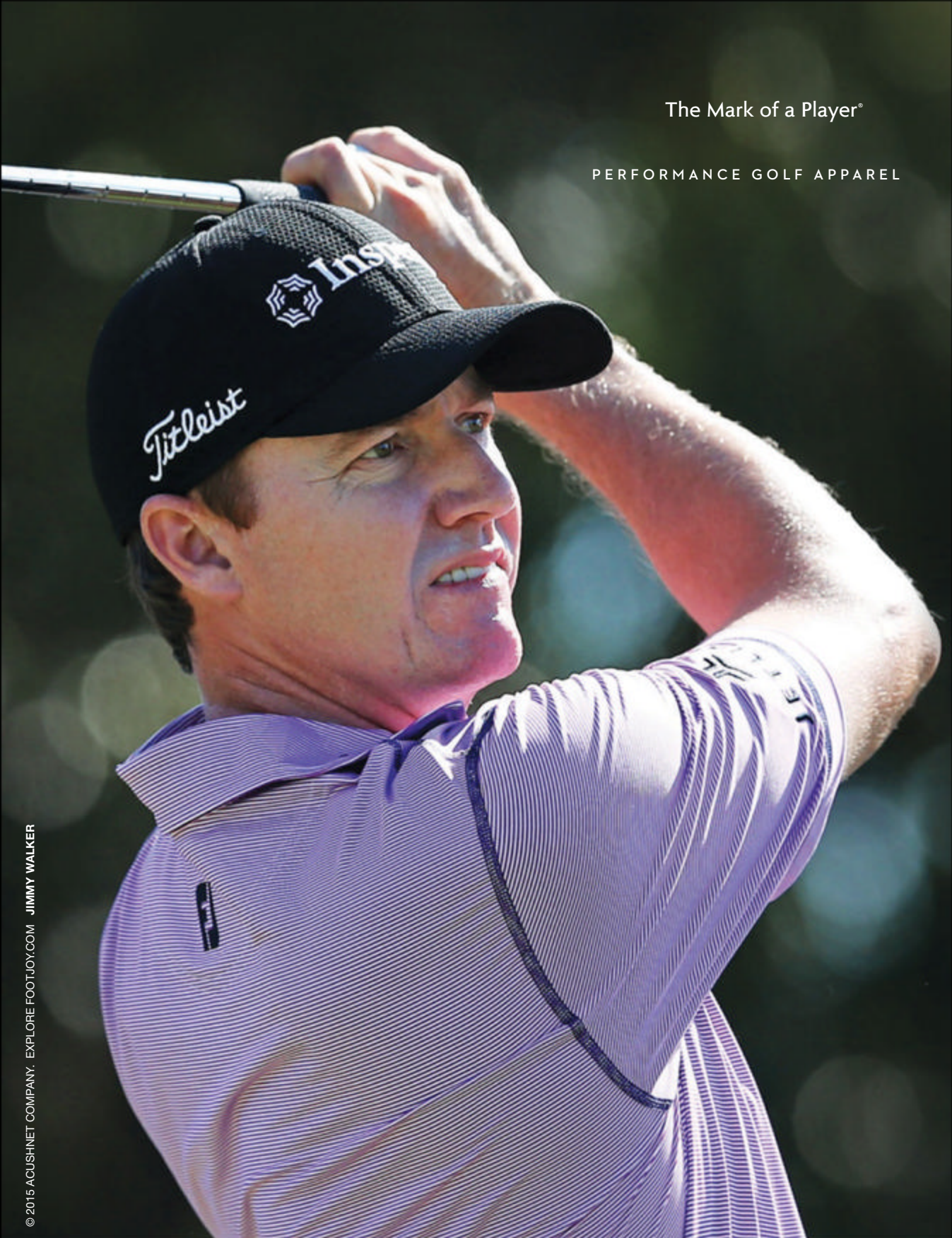
"Let me help you," the father would say.

"I can do it," the daughter would answer. She knew her father was behind her. That was enough.

Mickey is a newspaper reader and an obit reader. Here, in two sentences, is her approach to life: "I try to seize the day. I try to stay optimistic."

Golf is an excellent place to do both.

—Michael Bamberger



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